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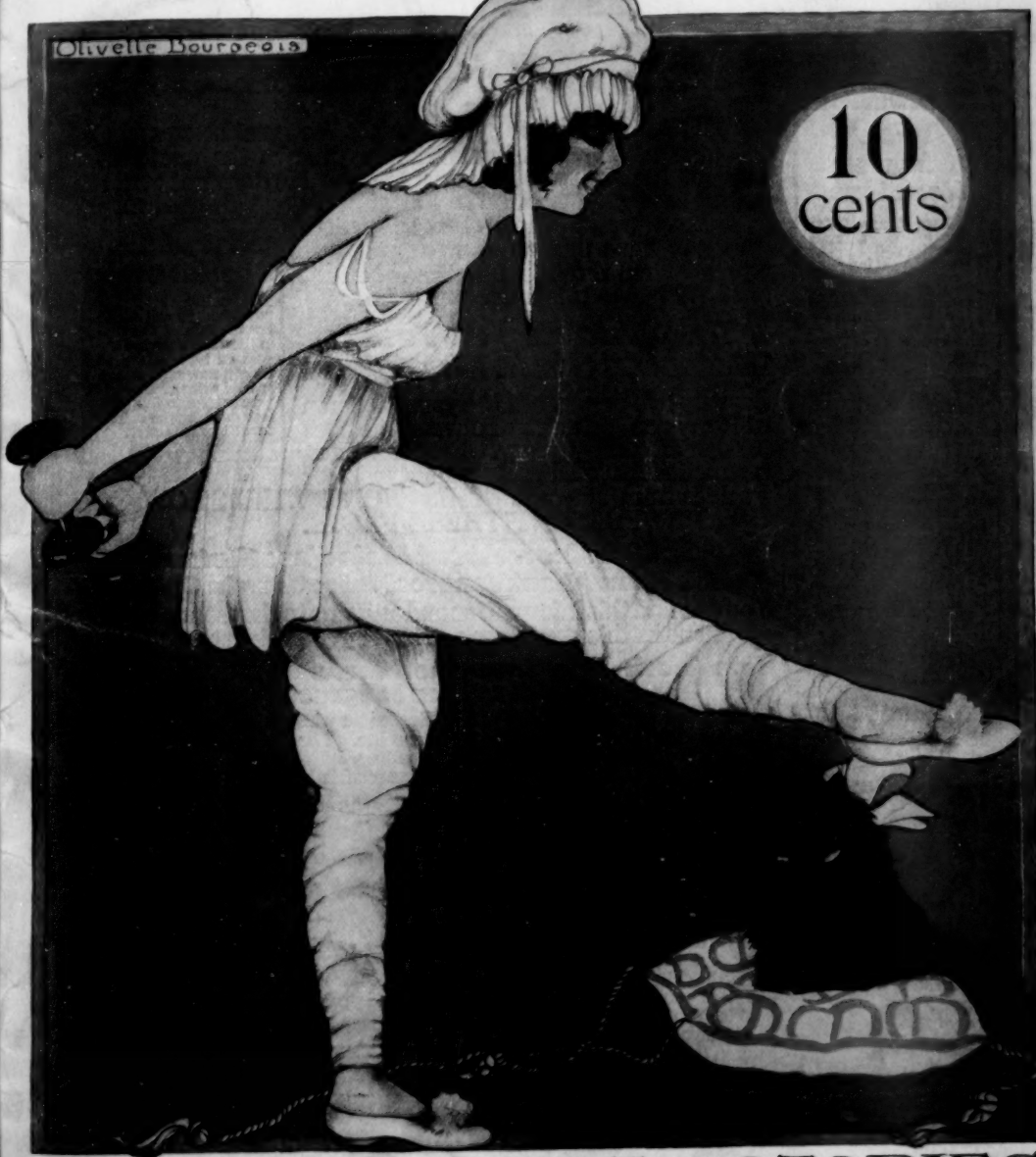
BLACK CAT



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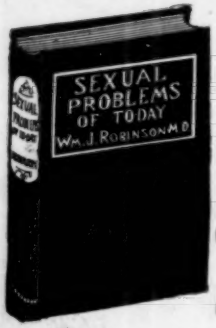

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The Black Cat

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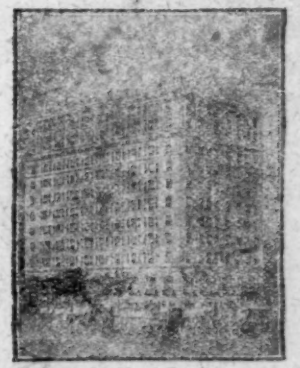

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(*Continued on page 45*)

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BY JOHN BERRY

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"Perhaps."

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"Gomez," said the consumptive with odd incisiveness, "there is no poison in all chemistry and *materia medica* that suits your particular case. To kill you I'd have to resort to a—*clod.*"

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Gomez stared. "A—what?"

"A clod." And St. Vrain, for some occult reason of his own, turned and gazed directly at Daddy Dan.

"A clod?" repeated the Mexican, still floundering. "You mean piece of dirt—?"

"Exactly."

"But why you kill me, *me*, with dirt?"

"Think it over, Gomez." And St. Vrain turned to the brown bottles again.

Gomez was hurt. In a vague way he even felt he had been insulted. So....the direst, the most barbarous of poisons, even rough-on-rats, was too good for him. And he was not even worthy to die by drowning, by fire, by bullet. He should perish by *dirt*. A clod was a queer weapon of death, very queer.... Was St. Vrain's "clod" really a clod? Wasn't the word used to mean something else, something mysterious, hidden, terrible, unheard-of, something that would doubly distil the bitterness of death and multiply its horrors?

Gomez shivered in his layers and folds of greasy fat. Then he gave his little piggish grunt. Bah! it was a stupid joke, that was all, the kind that that crazy, half-dead St. Vrain was always springing. He looked at the sharp, chiselled profile with a scowl, his stumpy fingers twitching, eager to choke the life out of that white, emaciated throat, what little life was left. But the sick man had money, he was a good customer; so the Mexican turned to handy Daddy Dan.

"How about Martinez's prescription?" he foamed. "You stand around all day when work pile up, pile up. Talk about old bones like you! All ought to die at age sixty. No good. Eat, sleep, and some more—that's all. You are not worth a dollar a month. Look at showcase; need cleaning—and at soda fountain; ice out in street, melting in sun! Meestar St. Vrain I tell you....."

But St. Vrain, heartsick, had gone. It hurt him to see dogs kicked, cats stoned, and Daddy Dan abused.

The old clerk, whistling "La Paloma," in a heroic effort to placate the implacable Gomez, saw to Luis Martinez's prescription, the dirty show case, the ice that was melting in the sun, the polishing of the windows, the dusting of the counters, Grandma Sanchez's liniment, the making of a new supply of soda-fountain syrups, the mopping of the floor—while the Mexican raved and roared, cursing his luck and wishing to God he had a clerk twenty years younger who could turn off some work!

And this was the story every day in the year. Daddy Dan, under-valued, underpaid, toiled early and late; and Gomez, over-prosperous, overfed, scolded unceasingly. St. Vrain, a literary man who had come to this New Mexican village for his health, had long been aware of the old clerk's smiling martyrdom; and often in his long, wakeful nights and short, sleepy days he half-banteringly quizzed Fate and indicted the jade for setting the seal of death on his own brow and leaving the parasite Gomez to feed on Daddy Dan's incomparable heart.

All Capulin loved the quaint old man with the wistful smile, baby bald head and paradoxically beautiful, homely face. He was everybody's friend. Like St. Vrain, he had come to sunny New Mexico on account of lung trouble. But that had been years ago. The climate had wrought a miraculous cure. Brought to Capulin on a stretcher, he lived to bury his wife, who was in perfect health at the time of their arrival. The desert had made a new man of him.

St. Vrain, who was by temperament an appraiser of human values, took a connoisseur's delight in Daddy Dan. His feeling was not based on gratitude or even on congeniality. It was impersonal. Daddy Dan was a perfect type; and perfection of type was St. Vrain's passion. Time was when this sick dilettant had been interested in people as people: he had loved women, made friends of men. But that was back in New York, in the heyday of his health and happiness and success, when the gods singled him out for splendid blessings. Now since he had come to this New Mexican desert and had broken every human tie, forgetting and forgotten, he found it impossible, in the shadow of his impending doom, to form new attachments. But if his heart was dead, his artistic instinct

was not. For still, even in these, his last days, the old quest lured him, the quest of the perfect type.

And he had found not only one perfect type in this enchanted land of painted sunsets and futile hopes, a perfect type of embodied goodness in Daddy Dan; he had found another also, a perfect type of evil in Daddy Dan's employer. And one filled him with quite as much enthusiasm as the other. As he loved pure, abstract, impersonal goodness, so he loved Daddy Dan. And as he hated the principle of evil, so he hated Gomez. And as it is a characteristic human instinct to desire ardently, religiously, the perpetuation of good and the extermination of evil, so St. Vrain, quite ingenuously, would have made Daddy Dan immortal and Gomez food for the crows.

The first was impossible. But the second? How easy! To rid the world of Gomez would be no trick at all. St. Vrain was already a clever dabbler in toxicology: he could pilfer some strychnine, cyanide, carbolic acid from Gomez's own store any day, and there would be dozens of opportunities to administer it. Detection? What of that? The slayer would be as dead as his victim—for St. Vrain had long since taken the pagan resolve to slip quietly and decently out of it all before reaching the horrible last stages of his disease. So then: cyanide for himself, strychnine for Gomez!

Why not? He had no scruples, none whatever. If he believed in anything at all, it was in man's inherent right to change the course of events in the name of justice, man's privilege to interfere intelligently in the monstrously blind and stupid workings of fate. For humanity's sake a poison-bearing germ is exterminated. For humanity's sake Francisco Gomez should be killed.

Yes; but he must be killed appropriately, killed according to the inviolably eternal and the eternally inviolate fitness of things. St. Vrain, still passionately searching for the perfect type, demanded of himself—and of destiny—that the taking off of Gomez should be ultra typical. His punishment must fit his crime. He must perish by a *clod*. And if this particular mode of punishment were out of the question, if no clod of the requisite kind could be found, then Gomez could live on! Such was St. Vrain's devotion to his æsthetic ideal.

St. Vrain's little tent-house was perched on a high, dry, windy ridge overlooking the town. Here a rude little garage had sprung up like a mushroom; and two native carpenters, under the sick man's surprisingly expert direction, had built a sun-porch in a few hours. The tent-house was furnished comfortably, almost luxuriously. There were books and engraved copies of modern French and Flemish artists, marvelously colorful views of adobe town from the small windows, a lively airedale terrier, a philosophic Persian cat—and Pedro. Pedro was a quick-witted, sparkling-eyed Mexican lad, a protegé of Daddy Dan's, who attended to St. Vrain's wants. It was a harmonious household, almost a happy one. St. Vrain, the seeker, had found two perfect types—Daddy Dan and Gomez. Now if he could only find a clod, *the* clod, he could die in peace.

One morning Pedro had some news for his master.

"*Wanos dios, Senor,*" he said musically when St. Vrain, languid and elegant in a lavender dressing-gown, sat down to his eggs and milk. "Gomez go to *rancho* today—down by Manero. Daddy Dan he tell me. Gomez gone all day. Happy Daddy Dan! Eh, *Senor!*"

St. Vrain gazed into space. "Get the car ready at once, Pedro," he said, making short work of his breakfast.

Pedro had the smart little red roadster at the door in an incredibly short time, and St. Vrain, white and smiling, drove away. When he reached the drug store he heard Gomez's shrill tenor voice, raised to falsetto fury, in the prescription room.

"Look here, old man," he was shrieking, "yesterday it was mangy cat, today it's crippled dog, tomorrow it's sick child. *Carrambo!* I'm d—d tired of this crazy trick of bringing in all sick and dirty trash from adobe town to treat and cry over and give my medicine to! Medicine it cost money. Ah, *amigo!*" catching sight of St.

Vrain and hurrying forward, "just in time! I take you with me to my rancho. Beautiful ride, not too far. I go out to collect rent from my tenant, José Garcia. Garcia he dog. He pay no rent for two months and more. You come, *amigo*, and fill lungs with fresh air and give germs ha-ha, yes?"

St. Vrain, coughing, excused himself. Gomez, with a last black look at Daddy Dan hurried out.

"Don't forget prescriptions," he called from the curb, after cranking his ancient car. "Plenty work today—no loaf on job!" And he rattled off.

A customer came in to take up Daddy Dan's time and attention, and St. Vrain went back into the prescription room, straight to the fascinating brown bottles, to one in particular, the one labelled simply, thrillingly, tremendously: "Poison, Cyanide." He opened it, hesitated, listened to Daddy Dan's genial laugh, then poured into a smaller bottle enough of the miraculous white powder to kill himself,—a dozen men; then with beautifully flushed cheeks he went back into the store toward the front door.

"What's your hurry? You haven't been stealing poison?" laughed Daddy Dan.

St. Vrain flung him a gay rejoinder and drove away. He laughed softly as he sped through picturesque adobe town and up the ridge. The blessed cyanide in his pocket assured him an ideal way of taking the Long Journey. Now if he could only find the clod for Gomez—

That afternoon St. Vrain's comparative serenity of soul gave way to disquiet. From a bewildering succession of supernally bright days, such as only the desert country knows, the weather changed suddenly to rain and cold. Dispiriting grey clouds pressed close upon the earth, smothering it; and a droning wind that was full of lamentation blew down from the Purgatoire mountains. The temperature dropped incredibly; and St. Vrain, who was a child of the sun, hating and fearing rainy days on account of the grisly distempers of imagination with which they afflicted him regarded the immediate prospect with a species of dismay. He pressed his face against the pent-up window pane, his gaze roving earth and sky. Both were unspeakably dreary. The clouds, merged into a pall, hung low, like an imminent doom; the snaky *arroyos*, the adobe huts —with their turquoise-blue wooden trimmings, the ugly "new" town beyond, all swathed in gloom, looked like the last picture of an *ennuied* painter, who, in a fantasy of the prosaic and familiar had decided to depict the end of the world by rain. So it seemed at least to the misanthropic St. Vrain.

"How long is this cursed rain likely to last?" he asked Pedro petulantly.

"Perhaps for three days, four days. *Senor*. They sometimes do at this season."

"Four days! And St. Vrain, the poor, sick, unreasonable child of the sun, would be forced to drag through the interminable hours, a prisoner within these walls! What could he do, he, dying by inches, he, loving the sun and the out-of-doors, mortally needing them to lift the melancholy that otherwise must drive him mad? True, there was the cyanide—handy, at his call; but Gomez—and the *clod?*

"Build a big fire, Pedro," he cried, in an excess of spurious gaiety, "a big, red, blazing one. Then bring in something to eat. We'll laugh at the rain."

He did laugh at it—for awhile. But when it continued through the next day and the next, throughout the week and into the week that followed; when it drizzled and poured, and dripped, and misted, with never even a pale little patch in the leaden sky to make one remember that there was such a thing in all the universe as sun, then indeed, his courage failed him utterly.

Pedro drew his great easy-chair up to the window for him and here he sat through the endless days, gasping, coughing almost incessantly; mutely begging Fate for a glimpse of his beloved sun, one glimpse before he died. He could not walk out, as all the country was a morass; besides, the dampness would have killed him. Motoring was out of the question. His car would have sunk to the hubs in the deep mud.

He remembered how another rain, just

such a deadly rain as this, had driven Ibsen's "Oswald Alving" mad; and now he himself would surely have to resort to his precious cyanide were it not for the Hope that bade him live yet a little longer. His life, from the viewpoint of his innate possibilities at least, had been a comparative failure. He had not written a great book; he had not had a transforming adventure; his friendships and love affairs had ended in disenchantment or disaster. But there remained one thing, one supernal thing, that he might do and do perfectly. He could kill Gomez, kill him beautifully, fittingly, in a way that God Himself would approve and Destiny envy.

Pedro watched him, sad-eyed and anxious.

"Ah, *Senor,* there never was such rain, I swear it by Our Lady of Guadaloupe and all the rest of saints! This is dry country; it dry up and blow away. Now it is ocean, all wet. Ah, end of world, that is it!"

But it wasn't. There came a day when the rain ceased! The next morning the sun shone, the sun, the miracle sun, St. Vrain's sun! Then a devil-may-care wind sprang up, sharp and zealous, and the drying process began in earnest.

Pedro placed the big chair on the sun-piazza, and St. Vrain, a gay wraith in the red afghan, luxuriated like a cat in the mellow yellow rays—Pasht, the philosophic Persian, stretched near, purred no more contentedly! The late shut-in breathed the sunshine, ate it, drank it; and it gave him new life. With new life it imparted also a mad desire, a wild ambition.

"Pedro," said St. Vrain one morning not long after, "get out the car."

Pedro's big black eyes popped out. "The *Senor* is not going out in car—yet?"

"Why, certainly."

"Ah, no, *Senor!* Hard dry crust on mud fool you—like false friend. Mud and water beneath. Wheels of car get stuck. Then the *Senor* have to walk home. Please wait two days, three days."

St. Vrain smiled happily. "Put the chains on the rear wheels, Pedro, and see that there's plenty of oil and gas and I'll take the consequences. No, not another word." Pedro did as he was bidden.

It was no trouble to drive the car from the garage to the front door of the tent-house, as the soil of the ridge was sandy.

"But wait," warned Pedro, helping his master in, "till you get down hill. Mud-holes by thousands."

St. Vrain laughed joyously. He courteously declined the boy's eager offer to go with him, explaining that he did not need his services and that he wanted to be alone.

The car darted off saucily and flew down the sandy slope. A bit of bad road stretched ahead, but this was negotiated with ease, St. Vrain not even having to resort to low gear. He waved to Pedro and sped away.

Ah, this was life! The sun, one of those fierce, untamed suns of the desert, St. Vrain's sun, was shining brilliantly, brutally; a strong, fresh wind was blowing; the air was ticklish and tangy; and the sand-packed road comfortingly gave the lie to Pedro's pessimistic predictions. To be sure, there were still plenty of reminders of the unparalleled rain. Much of the country was flooded; some of the streets in adobe town were canals on which improvised rafts were being propelled; and a few of the huts were completely isolated in the water.

But the most havoc had been wrought in the *arroyos.* The continuous downpour had loosened the earth, and the banks had shelved until they had lost all semblance of their former outlines. Indeed, in some of the deeper *arroyos* there had been regular landslides. St. Vrain, to whom the unusual appealed strongly, regarded this phenomenon with interest.

He reached the crossroads and then hesitated, undecided whether to go on toward Capulin or turn off in the direction of Manero. Toward Manero was the open country; there he would be alone. That decided him. Besides, the road seemed to be in even better condition than the one he had just travelled.

He had gone about a mile and was congratulating himself on his good fortune when he noticed that the road was

becoming somewhat sloppy. He slowed down—just in time to prevent the car from turning a somersault. As it was, the wheels sank into a mudhole up to the hubs. St. Vrain was hurled against the windshield, but escaped injury. He smiled grimly, recalling Pedro's warning.

He did not even try to start the car. There was no use. It was planted. He was too weak to walk home; all he could do was to wait for a passing vehicle to pick him up. Well, waiting wouldn't be so bad. The sun was warm, the wind exhilarating.

Half an hour went by, and just as the sun dipped over the jagged crests of the Purgatoires, leaving a chill that penetrated to the sick man's bones, he heard the sound of wheels behind. He turned and saw—Gomez.

"You! Caught like rat in trap!" cried the astonished Mexican; and he burst into a laugh.

"Will you give me a lift?" asked St. Vrain, shivering.

"Why, yes, *amigo,*" answered Gomez, secretly pleased by the other's mishap. "To save you life it make me happy. But crazy thing to do, eh?—coming out in car? Too much mud, deep mud. I leave my car behind like smart man and hire horse. Car no good in mud. Yes, come with me, but we go to my rancho on other side of Manero first, then we come back. That dog José Garcia he still put me off, always put me off. He pay rent today, or I put him out. Come, *amigo.* I wrap laprobe around you. It's only little way, then back home." And he helped St. Vrain up on the seat and made him comfortable.

They had gone a short distance when a sudden gust of wind blew Gomez's hat off. Cursing, he jumped down and went after it. St. Vrain, amused, held the reins and watched the chase. Gomez, fat, lumbering, awkward, lost his breath immediately, the hat impishly evading his bungling stabs. Driven by the wind, it bowled exasperatingly toward a deep *arroyo.* Fired to fury, Gomez made a lunge after it as it disappeared over the brink. The earth, cracked and shelving from the recent rains, gave way, and the Mexican plunged out of sight into the ravine.

St. Vrain gave a wild little cry, leaped to the ground and then, despite his weakness, ran—flew—toward the abyss. One glance proved that the conditions were even more favorable than he had dared hope. A huge landslide was imminent. The earth was cut with large cracks which needed only the pressure of a human foot to send the mass crashing below. At the risk of his life, St. Vrain ran to the brink and looked over. Some sixty feet below, Gomez's face, distorted with terror, was just emerging from the earth in which he had been buried.

"Go back!" he screamed. "You send rest down on me!"

St. Vrain smiled. He placed his foot on the nearest crack.

"It's the *clod,*" he said. "Do you remember?"

He pressed his foot on the shelving earth, then drew back. Gomez gave a cry of mortal fear. The earth shuddered, loosened, slipped, slid, plunged, crashed below, then.....silence.

St. Vrain, fascinated, stared at the landslide; then suddenly he had a vague feeling that the particular spot on which he stood was moving, trembling as if from an earthquake. He turned and was horrified to see a huge crack extending fifty feet from the brink, widening, ever widening and completely cutting him off from solid ground. What a doom hung over him! In a moment he would go down with the earth, a companion to Gomez, buried alive. No, never! The clod for Gomez, yes, but cyanide for himself!

He rushed toward the crack, leaped it, just in time. Then he turned and saw the enormous mass, the mastodon *clod,* dislodge itself and then sullenly, malevolently, inevitably, crash down on Gomez's new-made grave, superimposing on that sepulchre another grave, ten more, a hundred more, burying him as deep as Hell forever.....

And St. Vrain, coughing, sat down and smiled, satisfied.

But he did not thank God.

He felt that God ought to thank him.

That night they found him there, dead,

the cyanide bottle beside him, a written note clutched in his hand.

The note read:

The garden of life is choked with weeds. But now and then one finds a flower, a rare flower exhaling the fragrance of good deeds, without which any garden, though ever so beautiful, is a desert. Villagers! There is a flower, one flower, the rarest, blooming here. There has been a heavy, cruel, hard clod pressing against the root of your flower, crushing out its life. The clod would have killed the flower in the end. So I have removed it

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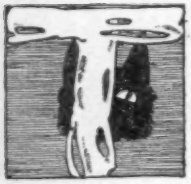
Most of us have at one time or another been harassed by the raucous sound of a worn and cracked phonograph record and can readily sympathize with a fellow being who is tortured nightly by such an abomination.

In THE SCRATCHED RECORD *by Grace Van Braam Gray* in our next number, you will get the story of a chap who was not only assaulted each and every night by defective music but was also mystified and unnerved by the freakishness of a record which never went bad twice in the same place.

THE CORPSE DELICIOUS

BY PAUL WILSON

This story was written some time before Bernstorff began "putting two of everything into the old suitcase" and is therefore somewhat prophetic. It is about Seaman McGoogan, who received the rating of a petty officer and went ashore to celebrate in a manner befitting the occasion.



THE little navy tug *Oskalusa* lay moored to the dock at Port-au-Prince, her war color blistering and cracking in the Hatian sun. The Coy Canuck, perched on the after capstan, frowned darkly. He was suffering from *ennui*—though *he* would not have called it that. Above his soft brown eyes the perspiration trickled down unwonted furrows and from time to time certain facial muscles contracted viciously upon a huge cud of "ship's," and a jet of amber sped accurately between the mooring bitts and over the channel rail. Thus he expressed his deep and soul-destroying disgust, as only an expert masticator can.

"Some life," he soliloquized. "Some outfit, huh! Join the navy an' see the worl', learn a useful trade, get free lodgin', free chow—that a razorback hawg wouldn't eat—an' on top of all these blessin's, a dollar a day to spend for court-martials. Say 'Ay, ay, sir,' to ever' idiot you meet an' always be ready to lay down an' be a doormat for some fetus-brained lobcock to walk on. Oh, it's a gay life, me lads. Yo, ho, ho, an' a bottle of grape juice."

He glanced down at the "hash mark" on his left sleeve, which recorded a previous enlistment. "Five years in an' never had a furlough. I wisht to—"

He was interrupted by a tired voice intoning, "'Hail to the chief who in triumph advances—' Hey there, my gentle flatfoot, come out of the twilight sleep. Ain't it enough that I gotta be a mother to you all the days of me life, buy your grub, clothes, and chewing tobacco, give you liberty and spending money and take you to the mast and comfort you in your last moments? But even when I want to make you a petty officer I gotta blow mess-gear to find you."

The ship's writer paused for breath and the Canuck slid, crab-fashion, off the capstan. "Whaddye mean,—petty officer?"

"'Come thou with me and thou shalt see,
While breaking hearts beat louder—'"

As he followed the scribe to the office, it penetrated his dazed intelligence that, either through the oversight of Providence or an incredible leniency of the examining board, he had been recommended for the rating of coxswain.

The ship's writer borrowed the makings and two dollars, quoted more verse, and proceeded with the initiation. "'Petty officers shall show in themselves an example of sobriety and obedience,' and all that stuff. Savvy? All right, sign here. Shove off an' leave muh to muh sorrow. Liberty's up at nine p. m. If you're going to celebrate your meteoric rise in the service, make a date with some strong arm guy to recover the *corpus delicti.* The Old Man's just waiting for a chance to crucify somebody. His mother hated him in his cradle and when he sees a fellow getting on in the world it makes him as happy and full of gladsome glee as a chewing-gum demonstrator with a busted jaw. So, go thy way in peace and beware the 'cup that clears today of past regrets and—' much obliged for the ten *gourdes;* I gotta encourage Mom before she stops my grog."

"Don't mention it, yeoman. An' nemmine about the corpse delicious. When they ring two bells I'll be here in large numbers." The new petty officer departed

in search of someone who might loan him a rating badge.

As soon as possible after supper, the Coy Canuck was sitting by a little round table at the High Life Bar, consuming a cold one. A brand new "Crow," borrowed from the Texas Deranger, adorned his sleeve, proclaiming him a third-class petty officer in Uncle Sam's navy, and he was careful not to conceal the emblem from the bright eyes of the "Ray of Sunshine." In fact, he took pains to explain to her in Canadian patois the significance of the rating badge, and broadly hinted at even greater things to follow. However much the Canadian idiom may differ from the Haitian Creole, the discourse was well understood thus far, but when the Canuck ventured to prophesy with regard to Madamoiselle's share in his future good fortunes he met with the reply *"Pas comprendre,"* and it became evident that further conversation would have to do with trade.

Despondently the Canuck ordered another cold one, and his brown eyes, as they followed her movements, held the look of a scolded collie. He was not alone in his suffering, nor was he among the first. Many a marine and many a bluejacket came there to worship and to woo, bringing strange gifts and extravagant promises. Louisiana "cagin," Canadian patois and night-school French sang her praises and besought her compassion. But still the maid was fancy-free, and still the quarters flowed into the High Life while the beer flowed out. Some called her the "Golden Venus," some, the "Ray of Sunshine," and some, the "Haitian White Hope;" the one who gave her the last name had worn a black eye as his lady's favor.

The Canuck, sitting alone in his corner, received more refreshment, with which he proceed to drown his discontent. He did not deign to glance toward the other end of the room where several marines were demonstrating a taste similar to his own in the matter of liquids and love. Between draughts he thrust his fists against his ears to shut out their French-at-a Glance and stared glumly into space.

There is peace in Haiti when the dogs howl at night and the *tambours de voudou* strike the rhythmic swing of the boatmen's chantey; but tonight the dogs were silent and, away off in the "Caco district," could be heard the voodoo drums, beating a slow and sinister measure as if calling the devil's priestesses to the celebration of these horrid rites.

There had been rumors—there always *are* rumors, for that matter—and a few more marines, while possibly a few less of the native gendarmes, were on sentry duty. The gendarmes, with fixed bayonets on their carbines, walked post in their usual nonchalant manner; a Caco uprising was no treat to *them*. And the marines, on duty and off, gave more attention to wireless baseball scores from the States than to local rumor, even in those days when wholesale interments customarily followed the confirmation of such a warning. There were orders forbidding marines and sailors to be uptown unarmed, but a regulation automatic, with holster, belt and clips, is as heavy as an overcoat and seems to add as much to one's susceptibility to the heat; also, it is a dangerous thing to carry around when one is making a "first-class liberty" and wrestling with the spirit. So they generally ignored the order in question and armed themselves only with "cocomacacs," a kind of bamboo cane, elegant but solid and heavy.

The Coy Canuck slumped forward on the table, lost in reverie; he was trying to remember whether anyone had agreed to see him home before liberty expired, but something else persistently obtruded itself upon his mind—something agreeable but with a foreboding of disappointment, too. What the deuce was it? He could not recall, for when he almost had it, there returned the refrain, "Gotta get back before nine, gotta get back before nine, nine p. m., nine p. m. What was I thinking about? Back before nine, nine p. m." A colored gentleman at the piano was playing one of the earliest rags, the marines were singing, and the lights were dancing. The dancing lights made the Canuck dizzy; he leaned back in his chair and

closed his eyes. That was better; that coon sure could tickle the celluloid, but he wished he knew something later than "Jungle Town." He slouched farther down in his chair and slumber claimed him.

Sleep, too, at that moment, should have been comforting the well-known Caco general, Codieau, who, with two hundred and forty other rebellious patriots, had been made a ward of the watchful, though never waitful, government of Haiti. But information had trickled through the thick stone wall of the general's prison.

Four regiments of marines had been withdrawn from Port-au-Prince and sent to reason with the Dominicans, and another regiment had gone to Port-au-Paix on a similar errand of mercy; all ships of the Expeditionary Forces, except the tug *Oskalusa,* were distributed among Cuba, Santo Domingo and Mexico.

In the latter republic the Yankees were losing men, material and influence at a highly gratifying rate. German submarines filled the Atlantic and Baron Bernstorff was putting two of everything into the old suitcase and advertising for a caretaker. Were two companies of marines, down with malaria, and one little tugboat without ordnance, to crush into subservience the proud Black Republic? *Mais non, mes enfants!*

And so it happened that, just when our hero was falling asleep at the High Life, a certain sergeant-of-the-guard was wildly chewing his nails at the Caserne while General Codieau was charging down the Rue du Centre at the head of some two hundred odd followers, variously armed and bound for the custom house where ample sinews of war lay deposited.

There was a scattering rifle-fire and a cry of *"Les Cacos! Les Cacos!"* and within fifty-eight seconds practically every shop window, door and shutter in the city were closed and barred. If you want to see the best emergency drill in the world, fire a gun in Port-au-Prince and shout *"Les Cacos."*

The marines whom we left diverting themselves at the High Life heard the commotion and charged forth, cocomacacs in hand, just in time to encounter the head of the column.

Corporal "Hefty" Schleikowitz broke his cocomacac over a kinky poll and immediately went down under a rusty saber. His companions, a little groggy on their feet but still enthusiastic, were laying about them merrily when a fusillade from a dozen long single-shot French rifles, made in 1877, sent fragments of brick, concrete and glass hailing down upon them; they fell back into the barroom, closely followed by the rebels. Flinging chairs and tables behind them in their path, they dashed through the room and into the back yard, and although the wall there is ten feet high, they ignored it.

The Canuck, who had been partially awakened by the noise of battle and was trying to regain possession of his scattered faculties, was sent to the floor by the fleeing marines and trodden upon by their pursuers. He rolled into a corner and eyed further proceedings in profound, though silent, disapproval.

At the street crossing, five gendarmes and one native secret-service man armed with a "Young America" thirty-two, together with half a dozen marines, gave battle. General Codieau was unhorsed and came down with a sprained ankle. As two burly aids led him into the barroom he barked a short command to his followers. They rushed past and on toward the custom house, sweeping all resistance before them.

The rebel chief sat down, rubbed his wounded ankle and smiled ruefully at his lieutenants. "It is nothing," he said. "I shall feel all right presently. You go ahead with the work at the custom house, Fabre. Take it and hold it. Get all the rifles and ammunition there and distribute them. Send all your unarmed men, together with the others you do not need, to the old rendezvous. That is all for the present."

He turned to another. "Dixon, you take command at the rendezvous; those who have been waiting will gather there, bringing their small arms. There will be two thousand there before daylight. I shall make this place temporary headquar-

ters; it's as good as any other. The Yankees are scattered among the police stations and can't get together for two or three hours, if then; by that time you can have two hundred men here and the main force at the rendezvous ready to move. Everything according to plan, and keep me informed as you go."

The subordinates saluted and sped away. Half a dozen barefooted natives searching the living apartments adjoining and above the barroom. Madamoiselle was discovered, led into the general's presence and bidden to serve him. The convalescent Canuck was dragged forth and found to be alive. A black man clubbed his rifle to remedy the oversight, but madamoiselle dashed between him and his intended victim.

"Just like Pocahontas," murmured the Canuck; he was dead sober now, and his temperature dropped almost to zero. Madamoiselle imperiously waved the black man away.

"My house is not an abattoir, my general."

"Pray forgive my rough soldier, madamoiselle," Codieau responded absently. He sipped his wine, apparently at ease, but ever he hearkened to the sound of scattered rifle-fire which reported, now near, now far, the activities of his followers and the enemy. A volley from the Palace,—the guard was seeing shadows; a single shot from the Caserne,—someone had been slow in answering the challenge; isolated exchanges between French rifle and Springfield,—erstwhile peaceful citizens were resurrecting hidden weapons, while truant marines were dispersed at large and sniping where sniping was good.

Then came the noise of combat from the direction of the custom house. It did not last long. Twenty obsolete Krags, in the hands of loyal gendarmes, stopped the rebel advance; then a squad of bluejackets charged up the open street, firing as they came and laughing and shouting like little schoolboys on the campus. The rebels ran back as they had come, back toward the High Life where their general awaited them, already aware that the first stroke had failed.

The Canuck leaped to his feet and dashed madly for the back door, encountering in full career the little mulatto general. The latter, his finely chiseled features still immobile except for a slight distension of the nostrils, merely attempted to step aside, but his injured ankle betrayed him and he stumbled, tripping the sailor as he fell. In his wild struggle to extricate himself, the Canuck encountered a cocomacac.

Since 1914, it is not considered essential to have all the bloody work done off-stage; still, in deference to a public long accustomed to a delicacy in narrative bordering upon squeamishness, I should like to say that our hero had done nothing shocking—or, if so, not by intent. But, no; when he arose and resumed his flight the little general was dead; right peaceful he looked now—and right pathetic, too, in his neat khaki and pretty riding boots. The trace of the jungle snarl had faded from the slender brown face; the hair, preserving the kinkiness of his African forbears, was still neatly parted. He lay in the litter of broken bottles and overturned furniture, like a tired child asleep in a field of flowers. Here the Canuck should have come to attention, looked soulfully toward the ceiling and slowly removed his hat. And he might have done so, too,—for he was a devotee of the movies,—but his agile feet, all unbidden, were bearing him rapidly away from the scene of his late entertainment.

The rebels, leaderless and defeated, joined the main body at the rendezvous, then the whole force withdrew to the Plain of Abraham, where, a few days later, a punitive expedition busied them.

At 9.15 p. m. the Coy Canuck reeled on the dock alongside the tug *Oskalusa* and shouted, "Q. M. on watch! Heinrich Francois McGoogan, coxswain, U. S. Navy, returnin' f'm liberty on time, clean and sober."

"Jigger," warned the man on watch, too late. A harsh voice was heard somewhere in the darkness:

"Make that 'seaman' instead of 'coxswain' and mark him fifteen minutes absent overleave. Take the rating badge off

the damn fool and turn him in."

Morning came hot and close, as always. A penetrating, sickening odor of human untidiness floated out upon the bay; fetid mists arose along the water front where naked families embarked in their clumsy sailboats. Beating with sticks upon the gunwhales in accompaniment to the boatmen's chantey, pickaninnies and women took up the chorus, high and clear and oddly beautiful. From the valleys beyond the city, clean white cloudlets straggled up the mountainside, formed ranks at the crest and marched away.

The ship's writer, glancing from his door, saw McGoon sprawled on the starboard "Spud-crate," and raised his voice in song.

"Oh, we little miss the music
'Til the sweet-voiced bird has flown."

"Aw, lay off that stuff," growled the unhappy Canuck. Then he took up his chant of hate. "Some outfit, huh? Some navy! Join the navy an' see the worl'; learn a useful trade in the floatin' university, such as holy-stonin' decks, cleanin' spitkids and takin' abuse. Free chow—if you can eat it; free place to flop—if you can find one; free medical 'tention, 'cept you have to pay for it and then you get it from a hay-shakin' apprentice that don't know ipecac from nitroglycerine. An' on top of all these blessin's you get the huge sum of a dollar a day to give to the starvin' Belgians, an' the privilege of washin' your own clothes. Some outfit!"

The scribe carefully dogged his door and then retorted through the porthole: "That's what they all say, Henry, but they come back just the same."

In the Black Cat for May: THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FINN, *by Charles Boardman Hawes.* Three lumber jacks, longing for a change of atmosphere, divorce the "forest primeval" with its sheltering pines for the heaving decks of a lumber schooner. Their nautical education begins under a skipper whose gentle ways are most distinctly not their ways.

THE EPIC OF OLD CARK

BY HORACE J. SIMPSON

It is possible for a man to be a prig in the path of progress, if he happens to be one who has a taste for clams. Old Cark was such a person. He associated his taste for clams with his distaste for Jerry-built houses.

THIS is really the tragedy of Three Cove—of its premature birth as a select resort by the salt sea, of its blasted infancy, and of its early and lamented demise. Perhaps though, it would be a little unfair to its fathers to speak of Three Rills Cove as dead; let us compromise and call it a case of suspended animation. For possibly when there lives no longer an obstinate and artful Old Cark—

But let us get back to the beginning.

Clamfleet, juxta-mare, had outlived its day. Men of clear vision had foreseen the setting of its sun behind the mountain of a railway company's avarice when the first cheap excursion had turned a thousand trippers loose in its select streets. When a short-sighted town council decided to allow the reek of fried fish and the glare of three-penny cinemas on the very Marine Parade, Ossa was heaped on Pelion and, as a select resort for the great middle classes, Clamfleet was no more.

Mr. Chaplin Church, a town councillor, who had hotly opposed the transportation to Clamfleet of London's back streets in bulk, convened a public meeting and told the townspeople to their faces that they possessed less imagination than the municipal steam-roller.

"Good for trade, is it?" he roared at them. "Let me tell you that a bigger turnover doesn't necessarily mean a larger profit..... All right! Go on attracting the riff-raff of the metropolis with your cheap trips and your cinemas and your fried fish. Make Clamfleet the slum she deserves to be. In less than a dozen years Three Rills Cove will be proudly wearing the mantle of prosperity that Clamfleet has been blind enough to discard. Three Rills Cove! That's the name of the place that in a few years will have taken its position as the most select seaside resort within easy reach of London!"

Clamfleet sniggered. It remembered that, in the days before Mr. Chaplin Church took so burning an interest in local affairs, he had been a speculative builder. It remembered that he had bought some marsh land by the shore at Three Rills Cove; that he had put up a score of bungalows there; and that those same bungalows were still standing, empty and decayed. For Three Rills Cove was seven miles from Clamfleet, which was the terminus of the railway, and the roads were impossible.

So Clamfleet sniggered again, and went home.

"All right!" Mr. Chaplin Church told his wife in bed that night. "Let 'em snigger. A hundred thousand pounds invested in Three Rills Cove—and nobody above a costermonger will ever spend a holiday at Clamfleet again. I'll show 'em."

"Chaplin," she demanded, thoroughly alarmed, "you aren't mad enough to throw away any more money over that forsaken place, I hope?"

"Who's talking of throwing money away?" he snorted. "I shall invest it—and invest it in the best and biggest thing that ever happened my way. Don't you worry. Three Rills Cove will come into its own. When next season opens, it will have its first-class hotel, two score or more attractive villa residences, its golf links, and its tennis courts. The season after, visitors will find the accommodation and the attractions trebled. In a few years more, no place on the coast will be able to hold

a candle to it; everybody who is anybody will spend their holidays at Three Rills Cove."

Mrs. Chaplin Church was converted. Being an excellent wife, she never persisted in throwing cold water over any enthusiasm of her husband's. Once she had heard a street-corner orator assert that mighty empires had been built on the flimsy foundations of men's dreams. At any rate, Chaplin's dream was modest by comparison. He did not propose to build an empire, but a select resort for holiday makers. She dropped off to sleep and dreamed that he had done it.

Mr. Chaplin Church was not a man to allow grass to grow when once he had made up his mind to do a thing. Indeed, many a street of villas at Clamfleet and elsewhere testified to his dislike of growing grass where bricks and mortar could be profitably cultivated instead. Early next morning he had an interview with Messrs. Lone & Deeds, solicitors, with the result that the title and the amount of capital of the company for the development of Three Rills Cove were decided upon there and then.

In six weeks from that morning, the Select Resorts Syndicate Limited, drafted a regiment of workmen and much material to the Cove. The decayed bungalows were demolished, the foundations of a commodious and splendid hotel and of twenty attractive villas were started. Fearful and wonderful slashes were made in the flat dreariness of the landscape to provide future visitors to Three Rills with recreation on select golf links and tennis courts. In short, the wonted silence and solitude were invaded by a builder's yard run mad.

Nobody minded. There was nobody at Three Rills to mind. Nobody lived there except Old Cark—and he didn't mind. On the contrary, he welcomed the invasion. It was splendid thing for him; he had never had such a time in his life. He now sold more cooked cockles and clams in a week than he had formerly sold in six months, and without the trouble of taking them to Clamfleet.

Those carpenters and bricklayers and navvies liked nothing better than to see Old Cark stagger aboard the rotten old boat which had been moored for forty years in the middle one of the three rills from which the cove took its name. Generous chaps they were. There was a canteen on the job, and they treated the old clam-digger to as much drink as he could carry—and more.

All that winter the marshlands echoed with the ring of trowels and the bang of hammers on rafters and floors. A brand new town welcomed the spring with brick-red smiles and the breath of shavings and new mortar. Later on, pantechnicon vans rumbled along the fresh-metalled roads from Clamfleet and deposited heaps of furniture at the doors of the imposing hotel and at most of the attractive villas. Later still, yet before the holiday season had well commenced, smart motor char-a-bancs awaited the express trains—not the cheap excursions—at the terminus and conveyed well-dressed and obviously superior passengers to the splendid accommodations and select attractions offered by Three Rills Cove.

Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors often awaited the arrival of the smart char-a-bancs with a personal welcome for the visitors, so proud were they of having converted dreary marshlands to an up-to-date resort for the better classes, in a few months. As soon as the season commenced, all building operations were suspended and Three Rills Cove swept and garnished for its guests. Nothing was allowed to mar the comforts of the select people whom discrete advertising had attracted there.

To be sure, Old Cark caused a little unpleasantness at first. On the day of the opening of the Hotel de Luxe, and the bricklayers and navvies having departed, he shambled straight into the luxurious lounge and importuned a party of ladies there to buy his cooked cockles and clams. He was sternly warned that he must never commit the unpardonable sin again and conducted outside. In fact, Mr. Chaplin Church hinted strongly that the sooner he took his rotten old boat and his disreputable self from Three Rills Cove, the better it would be for everybody. However, the smart people who stayed at the Hotel

de Luxe seemed amused rather than annoyed by the vagaries of the old scoundrel whose only home was the ancient craft moored in the rill opposite the main entrance. And so Old Cark was allowed to remain unmolested—for a time.

It was when warm weather set in that the real trouble commenced. It has been said that the new resort owed its name to the presence, in the vicinity, of three rills. They intersected an expanse of salterns at the head of the cove, and meandered from the seawall down to low-water mark, draining the low marshlands of storm water. In the middle rill, which was in places fifty yards wide, Old Cark's boat, the *Hornet,* had squatted many a year, only lifting from her mud bed at spring tides. On each side lay vast heaps of shells, the refuse of almost a century's clam digging and mussel and cockle gathering; for Old Cark had known no other occupation in all his seventy years, and it had been his father's profession before him. There was a certain effluvium from the shells when the sun played warm upon them; and that, combined with the odor of shellfish cooked once or twice a week in the old *Hornet's* cabin, offended the delicate nostrils of the guests of the Hotel de Luxe, and they complained to the suave, immaculate manager. He in turn carried their complaint to Mr. Chaplin Church, who went to Old Cark, and peremptorily demanded that the nuisance be abated.

"Oh!" said Old Cark, puffing a cloud from a noisome black pipe into the gentleman's eyes. "So that's the lay of the land, is it? And who might you be, Mister Jerry-builder?"

"Don't be foolish!" snapped Mr. Chaplin Church. "This nuisance must be removed. I'll see that the shells are carted away—though I'm not sure but what I ought to charge the cost of the job to you—but you will have to move your old boat yourself. If you must cook clams and cockles and other offensive things, you must do it at a decent distance from other people's noses. You understand me? You and your old boat must clear out. I'll give you till high-water tomorrow afternoon. If you don't shift then, you will be shifted."

If Old Cark was upset by the stern order, he showed it strangely. He removed his evil smelling pipe, tucked it away in the folds of his grease-smeared jumper, and burst into a cackling guffaw.

Indignant Mr. Chaplin Church strode away, firmly resolved that, for the old scoundrel's insolence, he would show no leniency.

"Here!" called Old Cark. "Come back. Let's talk this out."

Mr. Chaplin Church was at heart a man of peace. If that old scoundrel and his rotten boat could be gotten rid of without fuss, so much the better. He went back.

"Well," he said, not at all unkindly, "what is it?"

He ought to have been warned by the sneering curl of Old Cark's upper lip, but he wasn't.

"You built all these houses and that slap-up public-house, didn't ye, Mister Mortar-hod? Reckon to make Three Rills Cove a better place than Clamfleet, don't ye? Ye wasn't asked to, was ye? I didn't send for ye to come and build a town close to my old boat, did I?"

Mr. Chaplin Church was still inclined to be pacific.

"Oh, come now, Cark!" said he. "You are talking nonsense."

"Am I, Mister Whitewash-bucket? Not half as much nonsense as your gas about shifting me and my old boat out o' this rill. You jest try shifting us and see."

"You mean to tell me that you are going to be foolishly obstinate? I'd hate to have to resort to force, you know. And I'm afraid that if the police do come to shift you, and you oppose them, they won't be any too gentle about it."

"The police!" sneered Old Cark. "They got no more power to shift me than you have. The blamed Government itself couldn't do it. When a man's got rights, he's got rights. And I've got the rights o' mooring a craft in this rill and using these salterns for my shells, and so had my father afore me. They come from the lord o' the manor; and ye can't take 'em away, Mister Putty-knife."

Mr. Chaplin Church was very angry; nevertheless, he saw the usefulness of

showing the high hand. The old reprobate meant to give trouble, possibly with the idea of inducing a bribe. Well, his peaceable departure would be cheap at a sovereign. Mr. Chaplin Church offered it suavely.

"Garn!" sneered Old Cark. "Go and spend it on drain-pipes. I'd only be robbing ye by taking it; for I could come back when I liked. I tell ye it was left in a will that my father, and his sons, and their sons, forever and ever, have the right of mooring a boat in the middle rill and using the salterns for shell heaps. Ye can't get away from what's put in a will."

Mr. Chaplin Church sighed and departed. It was obvious that the old scoundrel had a bee in his bonnet; otherwise he wouldn't have lived all his life in squalor aboard that rotten old boat, feeding mainly on shellfish, and spending what little he got from the sale of them in getting gloriously drunk.

Mr. Church had a friend to dinner that night, an old gentleman who had lived the whole of his eighty years at Clamfleet. To him he spoke of his trouble with Old Cark.

The old gentleman rubbed his chin.

"Now you mention it," he said, "I remember that he gave Standish a lot of trouble about thirty years ago. You bought the property from Standish's son, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Chaplin Church.

"There was some question about the right of Old Cark to use those salterns," said the native. "I remember that Standish was going to build a house there and use that middle rill as a permanent berth for a small yacht he had, but he discovered that he couldn't legally shift Old Cark and had to abandon the idea."

"Absurd!" said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I bought, not only the marshes, but the salterns and foreshore, right down to low water mark. Next winter we shall convert the sea wall into a smart Marine Parade and build a causeway right across the spot where that old rascal has his heaps of stinking shells. I tell you the whole blessed show is mine, and I can do what I like with it; rather, the Select Resorts Syndicate can."

Notwithstanding his conviction on the point, Mr. Chaplin Church saw Messrs. Lone & Deeds next day and instructed them to look into the matter. His caution was amply justified. Undoubtedly Old Cark had some sort of a right to use the rill for his boat and the salterns for his shells. The privilege apparently had been granted to his father for some trivial service by a former lord of the manor. This had been overlooked when the property was conveyed to Mr. Chaplin Church; but Messrs. Lone & Deeds were of the opinion that the old clam-digger could be induced to renounce his rights for quite an insignificant sum down. They would appeal to Old Cark's cupidity.

"Do," said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I'm afraid that if I saw the old rogue again I might lose my temper and spoil things."

So Mr. Jubal Lone went over to Three Rills Cove, saw Old Cark—and thought he had conquered. The promise of a brand new boat to replace the ancient *Hornet* appeared to succeed where the blandishment of hard cash failed, but the wily solicitor had been indiscreet enough to slip a half-sovereign into Old Cark's hand to seal the bargain.

It was the possession of so much money that enticed Old Cark to Clamfleet that afternoon and sent him back gloriously drunk. And had not Old Cark been gloriously drunk he would not have pushed his way into the Hotel de Luxe and insisted on being served with a "pot o' four ale."

His request was not granted, but he was taken firmly by his shoulders and put outside by the immaculate manager himself.

"Oh-ho!" gurgled Old Cark. "So that's your little game, Mister Whiteshirt, is it? Ye've been put up to this by Mister Jerry-builder Church! I know! All right! You may chuck Old Cark out o' your tin-kettle public-house, but ye'll find it's afore ye bought your shovel to chuck him and his old Hornet out o' that rill! Pull a blamed hornet out of her nest by the sting, would ye? You dam' well try it on!"

And so, when next day Mr. Jubal Lone took to Old Cark a properly-drawn-up document for him to sign, renouncing his rights forever, the solicitor got a set-back.

"When you have signed it," he wheedled, "you may go to Clamfleet and take possession of that brand new smack in Alder's shipyard."

He proffered the use of his fountain pen, which Old Cark seemed inclined to refuse. The old reprobate, after staring at the solicitor keenly, took the lower lash of his right eye between thumb and finger, and pulled it down with vulgar significance.

The solicitor was nettled. But he forced himself to be jocose. "Oh, I know there isn't a speck of green in your eye!" he said. "You want the new boat first? Very well; you shall have her. Come back with me and take possession."

Old Cark sucked furiously at his pipe.

"You hold hard, Mister Six-and-eightpence!" he roared. "What have ye put down on that paper about that new boat? Does it say I can bring her here and cook cockles and clams aboard her? Does it say I can keep on using them salterns for my shells, and stink out that penny public-house?"

The solicitor started. "Oh, come now, Cark! You don't expect Mr. Chaplin Church to make you an unconditional present of that new boat?"

"Him!" the old scoundrel screamed. "I wouldn't expect him to give me the smell of his dinner! But I'll give him the smell o' mine! I'll stink him out—him and his Jerry-built pub! You take that dam' paper back and tell him so!"

And before the crestfallen lawyer was half way back to Clamfleet, there wafted from the cabin of the old *Hornet* such an overpowering odour of stewing clams that the Hotel de Luxe and the attractive villas had to close all their windows.

"Chuck me and my old boat out of our home, would they!" muttered Old Cark, leaving the clams stewing and stinking on the fire, and shuffling down the mud to dig for more. "Chuck me out o' their stained-glass public-house, would they? Put their silly heads into a hornet's nest, they have! I'll show 'em."

And show 'em he did. For the warmer the weather became, the more shell-fish he cooked. One could not possibly expect people to stay in a hotel with permanently closed windows, any more than one could expect them to go outside and be choked to death by the reek of stewed clams and the effluvium from the heaps of long departed shell-fish. The superior visitors to Three Rills Cove did just what other people with offended nostrils might be expected to do. They held handkerchiefs to their noses until they got safely away from the nuisance; then called the Cove and the select Resorts Syndicate Limited all the bad names they could think of.

The story of Old Cark and his cockles and clams got into the newspapers. People chuckled—and remained content to take it on trust from the pens of descriptive reporters. Nobody wanted to go and smell for himself. Consequently, before the season was half over, the Hotel de Luxe was compelled to close its doors—as well as its windows. Pantechnicon vans again rumbled before the attractive villas—arriving empty, and going away full.

Whether Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors lost heart as well as money can only be surmised. What can be asserted quite definitely is that the Select Resorts Syndicate was wound up at the end of the season, and that the Hotel de Luxe and the attractive villas are now in a state of ruinous decay.

But the *Hornet* is still in her nest—Old Cark still digs for clams and cooks them in his cabin. As for the heaps of shells on the salterns, they do not grow appreciably; for nowadays Old Cark usually carries his refuse farther afield. There is quite a respectable heap in the exact centre of each tennis-court, and some smaller ones on the golf-links beyond. Sometimes—when he has been to Clamfleet and returned gloriously drunk—Old Cark will take a bucket and fill it at one of the parent heaps on the salterns. With unsteady gait he will lug it to the Hotel de Luxe, throw open a lower window, and make the night ring with the crash of falling shells on a hollow floor. Then he will lurch back to his old boat, shouting:

"Now, then, Mister Jerry-builder Church and Co! I'm ready for another bout with ye! One man agin a damned town—that's Old Cark!"

THE TERRIBLE BRINK

BY ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

A man may look another man in the eye and tell him to sit on a tack; but when he is looking a rattlesnake in the eye, he should walk humbly and abstain from doing anything which the snake might look upon as an "over act."

FROM that thrilling moment when the heavy pine root, jutting from the sheer surface of the bank, had given way under him, Lee Rivers knew that he could not hope to descend the Fairfield bluff as he had descended it. But above him he found other supports and purchases which enabled him to climb steadily upward until he reached the last and most difficult stage of his arduous task. This was the delicate manœuvering that was necessary in order to climb over the shelving brink. His mainstay in this was the bleached root of a live oak. Rivers knew this to be dead, but he hoped it to be strong.

Fifty feet below him, pulled up on the shelving rocks on which the lazy yellow tide of the Santee river lisped and murmured, his small canoe rested. There Rivers had left it when he had made up his mind to climb the great bluff of Fairfield plantation. His purpose in doing so was to examine the surface of the almost sheer fall which, year by year, had been giving way, endangering, though remotely, the Rivers' home, which stood not more than a hundred feet back from the edge of the bluff. It would have been wiser if he had had himself let down over the edge of the high bank; but he had believed the other way possible, and he had attempted it. Now that he had climbed to the crumbling lip of the clay wall, he realized his mistake; at least he knew himself to be in a most difficult position. A slip on his part, a sudden cave-in of the rotten bank, a breaking of the dead root on which he stood, would send him hurtling fifty feet to the rocks below. His way out of the peril lay in going upward. So he summoned his strength and his self-reliance for the last and most dangerous effort.

The strength of Lee Rivers was young strength; and his thirty years of outdoor life on a plantation had made it resourceful strength as well. Looking at him as he carefully but painfully made his way up the baffling face of the Fairfield bluff, pausing now and again to examine the nature of the fall's surface, ascertaining how far the rock extended upward, and what was the density and the cohesive power of the clay, one would say that he was built for just such climbing. He was of medium stature, strongly knit throughout; and his clear features and dark-blue eyes gave assurance of steady foresight and calm courage. All his movements showed a swift and lithe control, and they hinted, as such things do, of a ready and resourceful nature.

Whatever strength and courage he had, Lee Rivers now urgently needed; for as he began to edge his way up to the final reach of the sheer bank, he heard a dry crackle beneath him and felt the live-oak root on which his weight was resting begin to sag. But his right hand and forearm were already over the bluff, groping there to grasp some support; and his fingers found and took hold of a small but strong green root, which the giant oak that hung over the precipice had, by some abnormal exuberance of growth, looped out of the ground. With such a hold, Rivers began to draw himself upward. The bank, he felt, would not give way, because through many years the oak roots had firmed it at this point; the particular root that he was gripping seemed,

moreover, stubbornly tough. In a moment he would have his left hand and arm over the edge, and then he could pull himself up to sound footing and to safety. But before his eyes, moving slowly upward, cleared the rim, Rivers heard a sound that made him relax everything save the grip of his right hand. To relax that, he knew, would be fatal. Now his left hand, a little nervously, sought a hold in the smooth bank; his weight subsided on the dubious cracking root; and in his veins the warm blood was chilled.

His eyes had glanced downward, but there was naught beneath save the horror of the open air-space and the gleaming rocks below. But greater was the horror of the dry, insistent, penetrating challenge that was coming from the terrible brink above him. Rivers, in some subconscious way, tried to deny that the sound he was hearing was the one which, under the circumstances, he most dreaded to hear; but the natural honesty of his mind, even in such a stress, rejected the vain denial of his danger's reality. He knew that on the ledge of land just above him, the ledge which a moment before had promised him refuge from the jaws of the chasm beneath, was now heaped in his direction coil a rattlesnake, which, probably aroused from his lethargy in the sun by the groping of the man's hand, had now become alarmed by the appearance of another hand coming above the brim of the cliff. Lee Rivers had not seen the reptile; but from his familiarity with every foot of land along the top of the bluff, he knew just what the snake's position would be, and from the tone of the vibrating rattles, he judged the serpent to be old and irritable.

Over the head of the climber on that fatal cliff, a massive live-oak extended powerful moss-draped limbs above the empty gulf. Against its trunk, Rivers knew, its roots were heaved high in fantastic forms; and he remembered two gnarled ones that ran out from the base of the tree toward the cliff, forming between themselves a sheltered space, bare and sunny. From his position in relation to the oak, Rivers guessed that the rattler was lying in this space; and this was the one spot accessible to him. Below, therefore, lay death on the rocks after a dizzy fall; above, inevitable death awaited in a yet more cruel form. He had no way to defend himself from the reptile; and, knowing the rattlesnake's nature, Rivers realized that the snake had viewed his approach over the cliff as presaging an attack, and forthwith had scalily heaped himself into a coil and had begun the warning whirr of his rattles. What was sure to happen if he drew himself up over the cliff, Rivers knew only too well; nor could he help knowing what was equally sure to happen if he continued to hang over that terrible brink.

At such a crisis in a brave man's life, the scenes about him become intensely vivid; and this is especially so if the scenes are familiar ones. One downward look, one backward glance across the broad placid river, had fixed on the doomed man's vision the ripple of the waves on the indolent black rocks far beneath him; the wavering lines of pale green marsh on the opposite side of the river; the deeper green of the cypresses, standing like sentinels on the lonely delta; the calm gold of the level rice fields below the Fairfield wharf; the white sails of a schooner near the river-mouth, floating idly on glassy waters. Never had life seemed more peaceful, more desirable; but because of the slow cracking of the roof under his weight and because of the sinister singing of the rattles above his head, life had never before seemed to Lee Rivers so perilously uncertain. This uncertainty was deepened by a realization that the desperate situation was in his hands alone.

If this fatal happening had occurred in the winter, he might have called for help with some hope of being heard and of being rescued. But he was the only member of the family left on the plantation, the others being at the summer home on the nearby coast. The only person likely to be in the house was the old negro caretaker, and his powers of hearing had long since left him. The other workers on the

place were far down in the ricefields or out in the turpentine woods. The man on the cliff was alone; alone with his fate,—with the rattlesnake just above and the rocks far below.

More and more now, the strain of his weight was being eased from the breaking root below to the good right hand and arm above. Partly to change this painful position, and partly to satisfy himself that the snake was where he supposed it to be, he once again drew himself up very slowly and craftily until his eyes peered over the rim of the cliff.

All that his mind, acting on his memory of the place, had pictured, was there, even to the smallest detail. There was the great gray trunk of the oak; there were the heaved, rough-barked roots; and there in the small triangular space was the dreaded reptile. He was much larger than Rivers had anticipated that he would be. He was not a timber rattler; a genuine diamond-back of the swamp he was, formidable of proportions and grim of aspect. Rivers knew, from one swift glance at that broad malignant head, what a single stroke of those cruel fangs would mean. Nor did it seem strange to him that the snake was where it was: the dense Fairfield shrubberies were close at hand, and this particular spot was sheltered, sunny, remote,—just the situation a rattler would choose for basking and for a day-time retreat.

After sight of him, Rivers once more, and with a heart that could not, though courageous, but beat with failing hope, lowered himself to his old position. What chance there was for him, he could not see, though the urgency of his courage never forsook him. He could not safely advance; he could not with safety retreat. Of the two, to let go and fall seemed easier; but to climb on and battle to the death if necessary with the monster seemed the only course for a man to take. If there were any other thing to do, Rivers could not think of it. The situation as he saw it was so simple that it was elemental. Apparently it meant death either way. Rivers had the choice of two paths, and both led into darkness. But slowly, under the grim strain of hanging on without hope, a fine sense of manhood came to the rescue of his conflicting feelings. If he had to die, he would die fighting. Certainly he would not fall if he could help it; the only other thing to do was to draw himself up, and then meet with all the courage he could the dread creature that awaited him at the top of the Fairfield bluff. The reptile, he believed, would think himself cornered and attacked, and would strike while he was struggling to gain a foothold on the level space above the cliff; for the rattler could not but interpret such struggles, violent as they must of necessity be, as directly menacing him and launched against him.

To keep his present hold much longer, Rivers knew to be impossible. The root on which his weight had rested had now sagged so low that it was of practically no support. Into the clay wall he had kicked a small toe-hold; and this was of some help, though the purchase was slight and the surface slippery. He had to climb up; and the time to do so was at hand.

But what had to be done was to be done, Rivers determined, in no sudden mood of desperation. He was thinking coolly and clearly of his chances. Everything seemed against him; but something might break in his favor. He had always liked the axiom, "The worst turns the best to the brave," and now he thought of its truth. At least he would yield nothing until made to do so; and as he faced what seemed like a sure and cruel fate, he had in his heart that final hope which strong men repose in sheer nerve and in the grim purpose to see an ugly matter through.

As he drew himself up this last time, the dry whirring of the husky rattles was louder than ever; when the snake came within sight, he seemed to be in a higher and more tense coil than before. The big reptile was dreadfully well prepared. Rivers, brave as he was, knew that he was in no way prepared save by a certain naked courage which, bare and keen-edged, was now his only weapon and his only shield. There was no stick or stone within reach for him to use against the rattler;

and the moment for the encounter had come.

But instead of drawing himself up over the rim of the cliff, as he had determined to do, Rivers lowered himself once more to his old painful position.

It was not that the courage of his purpose had failed him. But a thought, carrying with it a dawning hope, had come to him. And this thought was a result of Rivers' accurate knowledge of rattlesnake nature. He knew that a rattler, unless cornered and continuously menaced, would invariably retreat from man. His hand above the cliff would continue to threaten the rattler, though not enough to make him keep his coil; and if Rivers could keep himself out of sight beneath the shelf of the cliff, the reptile might crawl away over the oak roots. But would the snake do it, and could Rivers hold on sufficiently long to enable the slow-moving rattler to escape? He trusted the snake to retreat, and he *would* hold on. Therefore all the strength he had summoned to meet the rattler he now meant to use in clinging to the face of the cliff. Thus, gripping his hold, the man waited,—waited for the sound of the rattles to cease. He was fighting two battles; one was the mere physical effort to keep his position; the other was the mental struggle of suspense. And it was none the less a true fight, though it was one of silent waiting rather than of action.

The strain was so tense that he began to lose the feeling in his right arm; it seemed like a bent rod of iron. So much the better, he thought grimly; for if it's rigid iron it cannot give way. His eyes ached, and his whole body seemed racked. But persistently, coolly, he kept his mind clear. All the thronging impulses to give way to fierce anger, to a fatal struggling upward, he resolutely crushed, though it took strength he ill could spare to do so. And all the while he was listening, listening.

A little breeze off the river waved the banners of moss over his head, and a sighing was heard in the boughs of the mighty oak. Far off in the island-marshes, a great blue heron gave a raucous call. Then,—then there was silence. Rivers awoke to it as out of a dream. The rattles' whirring had ceased. For a moment there was absolute quiet; then a sound of scaly movement was heard. This was followed by the soft rasping of snaky scales over rough-barked oak roots. Then again all was silence. Lee Rivers drew in a deep and steady breath. He knew that the diamond-back was gone.

Full consciousness that his life now depended on his strength alone sent a flood of power into his nerveless arms. He drew himself up, he got one knee over the cliff; with his left hand he caught one of the large oak roots. A moment later he lay exhausted but safe in that small triangular space which his resolution and his patient resourcefulness had transformed from a place of terror and death to one of peace and refuge.

GENTLEMEN OF GENEROSITY, *by Harrison Seville* is another story you will read next month. It is an amusing tale of two engineers, each of whom has a choice between opportunity without honor and honor without opportunity. They are generous to a fault, but it is a maudlin generosity which misses the sublime because it is merely a bird of passage.

THE SUBSCRIBERS' SERIAL

FRANK VERNON STUMP

"B. L. T.," newspaper columnist and one time prize story contributor to The Black Cat, would draw a line through the present title of this tale and caption it "Why the Editor Left Town."

THE editorial room of the *Martinsburg Herald* looked as though a cyclone had struck it. I had learned as a newspaper man that this was the normal state of a large number of editorial rooms, but somehow it seemed to me that on this particular morning the *Herald* office was somewhat more topsy-turvy than customary.

As I entered, Elisha Orcott, the stout, wheezy little editor, his glasses set a trifle farther out on the end of his nose than usual, was pounding with his stubby fist the much used and much abused desk that had served him for more than twenty precarious years. Upon noting my presence, he threw a few sheets of odd-shaped manuscript on the desk and tilted back in the dilapidated old swivel chair with a jerk.

"What's the matter, Mr. Orcott," I asked.

"What's the matter?" he repeated after me, glowering at me over his nose glasses, his flabby face red with rage. "Matter enough, thank you. You may be thankful that you quit the newspaper field, George, and doubly grateful that you have no fool son like Jack."

I admit that I was somewhat shocked to hear the irritated little editor speak thus of his only son. The last I had seen of Jack Orcott was two years ago when I was still working on the *Herald*. I remembered him as a lanky blond, just out of high school, impetuous, visionary, an athletic bug, with a strong leaning towards music, art and girls—strong accent on the latter. He had done some cubbing on the *Herald* and appeared well pleased with his own efforts. Yet, withall, he had always impressed me as a good-hearted, likable youngster who in some way would finally make something of himself.

"Why, Mr. Orcott, I am surprised to hear you say that of Jack," I remonstrated. "I have always considered him a fine young fellow."

"He is a fine young fellow," admitted the father, with a shade of appreciation in his voice, "but it is a settled fact that he never was patterned in the mould that produces good newspaper men. He is always scraping up some new-fangled idea to 'win the wily advertiser or to hold the patient subscriber,' and when he gets into it over his head and he can't see his way out he runs off and leaves me to wrestle with the job. That's precisely the predicament I'm in right now. There," he continued, pointing at the odd-shaped manuscript lying before him, "is the result of his last wonderful stunt; the last chapter of his 'Subscribers' Serial,' each chapter before it bad enough in itself and this last one a fright to even think of, to say nothing of publishing."

"Tell me about it," I said as I seated myself across the desk from the blustering editor. "You know I have been out of town for some time and have not kept up with local events."

"I'll tell you about it," said the editor, "and I'll leave it to you if a man hasn't a perfect right to lose his reason completely over this dang thing that Jack calls a 'serial innovation.' Serial hell would be a liberal way to describe it, especially this last installment.

"The trouble started three months ago when we finished running 'The Golden Nest Egg,' furnished by the Continental Press Bureau. I didn't enthuse over 'The Golden Nest Egg' as Jack did and I de-

cided then to purchase no more stories. Jack was quite peeved over my stand on the question and sulked around for a week or more. You see, having been 'Campus Editor' on his college paper for a year, he returned home this vacation with the fool idea that he knows more about editing a country daily than I who have run this sheet since the year before he honored creation by his advent into this unguided world of ours.

"Well, to get down to the story, one day after he had recovered from his sulky spell, in rushed Jack with a wonderful idea. 'Dad,' he said, 'we are going to run another serial along an entirely new line.'

"'Are we?' I said. 'Well, I guess, sonny, we are not.'

"'Now, listen, Dad,' he insisted, 'you know we must do something to win the wily advertiser and to hold our subscribers. All the big city dailies run continued stories. I quite agree with you that Press Bureau stories are not just the thing, but I have something original, just got it figured out; it's never been tried before and I bet you will like it immensely when I tell you about it. Everybody I have spoken to about it thinks it is a bully scheme and several have agreed to help, among them Judge Hudson, the Reverend Peterson, and Tapper, the undertaker.'

"'What in Sam Hill,' says I, 'have they got to do with our running a serial story?'

"'Lots, Dad; they have each consented to write a chapter of the story, you see.'

"'No, I don't see,' I remonstrated. But that young rascal would not listen to reason. He went rambling on with the explanation that he would write the first chapter of the story, so as to get it started off right, and then it would be passed on to some other person well known about town to pick up the thread of the yarn and write the next chapter according to his own notion, and so on around until some day we would announce that the next chapter would be the final one and the last writer would have to wind up the serial as best he could.

"'And there is that last chapter,' he said again, pointing to the script lying on the desk between us. "If you can read that windup without suffering an attack of the 'Willies' you are more callous to editorial proprieties than I have ever suspected. But before you suffer the agony of reading it allow me to give you the necessary connecting links.

"You understand, we were to run a chapter in each Saturday's issue so that, as Jack said, people would have a chance to discuss it with their friends and neighbors over Sunday, thus giving the *Herald* much valuable publicity. Also, this would give each writer almost a full week in which to assimilate what had gone before and allow him time to write the next installment.

"Well, as I stated, Jack was to write the first chapter, and it wasn't such a bad start, either. Of course he had a handsome hero who was a college football champion, to be sure, and a beautiful butterfly of a heroine. He introduced the villian in the first installment for fear that important personage would be overlooked by the scribes to follow, and he had the unsophisticated little country lass who had come to town to work in order to help her poor 'Pap' pay off the mortgage held by a heartless old skinflint who was the guardian of the heroine. Besides, although I thought he needlessly complicated his story by so doing, he introduced into the first chapter all the near relatives of the leading characters."

"The story appears to have had rather an auspicious start, at least," I ventured encouragingly.

"Well, yes," agreed Orcott, as he removed his glasses and began to rub his smarting eyes. "But, believe me, my trouble began with the third chapter. Judge Hudson had turned in the second installment and had picked up the thread of the tale in pretty fair shape where Jack had left off. Before he concluded his part of the story he had found a job in a candy store for the little country girl, with the villian as one of the steady customers. He had brought the hero and the heroine to that store for an ice-cream soda, or something of the sort, just in time for the hero to lambaste the villian

for annoying the unsophisticated lass, and this has ruffled the temper of the beautiful, but jealous, heroine. Everything was lined up in melodramatic style and a lively rumpus was in sight when the judge stopped writing."

"I don't see that you have any cause for complaint, Mr. Orcott," I remarked. "Your story seems to be moving along gloriously."

"Up to this point, yes. But wait a minute," he snapped back at me, as he readjusted his glasses and leaned across the desk in my direction. "I want you to understand that up to this point I, myself, was quite well pleased with the serial. The public seemed to be taking a surprising interest in the story. I had heard many complimentary remarks and had about concluded that perhaps after all Jack might have tucked away in some remote recess of his cranium a spark of real sagacity and foresight."

"That's good," I urged.

"What's good?"

"Your confidence in Jack's good judgment."

"You are wrong, and so was I," and he settled back in his chair again, a trace of disgust in his voice and manner.

"You see I placed too much confidence in the boy," he continued. "The next installment of the serial had been allotted to Mrs. Tugwell, the milliner. On the day she was due to hand in her effort I left the office in Jack's charge and went to Rockport to an editorial gathering. Say, mister, when I returned that evening and read Mrs. Tugwell's chapter of 'The Subscribers' Serial' I had the first real nightmare in twenty long years. Mrs. Tugwell is nothing if not thrifty and cunning. I knew that, but I didn't suppose she would allow her mercenary tendencies to carry her to such extreme limits."

"What's the idea—did she ask you to pay for her chapter?" I queried.

"Not much; she is too shrewd for that. But let me assure you that her chapter was one of the neatest advertisements that ever adorned the front page of any newspaper, big or little. You see, we had failed to stipulate that no local characters or advertising matter could be introduced into the serial. This oversight was an awful blunder on our part. Instead of taking up the story where Judge Hudson left off, Mrs. Tugwell shot the yarn all to pieces."

"Broke the continuity of the story," I suggested.

"You bet she broke the continuity. Say, man, she lost all sight of the story in her insane effort to get all the female characters into 'the corner millinery emporium with the white front,' so she could rig each of them out with the latest headgear. She even had some of the women relatives of the male characters in the crowd that clamored to see her showing of latest Paris models. Of course she did not use her own name, but she described the front of her store so minutely that the stupidest man would have no trouble locating it with his eyes shut."

The editor wheeled impetuously and gazed out of the window for a few seconds, slowly shaking his head.

"And to think that Jack would allow such stuff to go through without a lot of blue penciling," he continued with added vehemence. "Of course Mrs. Tugwell has four 'grand openings' every year—spring, summer, fall and winter. For each of these she carries about an eight-inch double column 'ad' for three days, and she runs an inch card the year round. Her spring opening is always the largest, and the last time she became real generous and took two columns of space for two days and has fussed ever since about the size of her bill. I suppose it was to humor her a little on that account and to encourage another double column spread for the next opening, that the boy permitted the chapter to go through as she had written it. Or else, perhaps, he knew no better."

"Perhaps Jack figured correctly," I suggested. "Maybe she will take another two column spread next spring."

"Maybe she will, but more likely, maybe she won't. She will probably consider that she received so much free publicity out of her chapter in the serial that she will take no space at all for the next opening."

"At least I trust the balance of your story ran along smoothly," was my comment.

"You're wrong again. The next chapter fell to Attorney Dunn. He's a bright fellow, and a good friend to this office, as you know, but he had to allow his spleen to get the better of him and the troubled waters became quite tempestuous by the time he had finished. You see, the milliner wanted to get another crack at free publicity in the next chapter, so she had wound up her installment with the statement that all the fancy bonnets purchased at 'the corner emporium with the white front' were intended to be worn to a party to be held at the home of the beautiful heroine. This party was left for Attorney Dunn to handle. It is my private opinion that she wanted, not only to receive the additional publicity, but to see a man flounder around in an attempt to describe a swell society event.

"Now lawyers are human, and some of them carry a grudge a long way. It so happened that when the milliner took her divorce case to court she employed an attorney over in Millville. Lawyer Dunn remembered this, so he straightway converted what was intended to be the heroine's swell society function into a picnic in Miller's grove and had all the women go bareheaded.

"But the lawyer rather collected the loose ends of the story and got it running smoothly only to have it smashed to flinders again by the undertaker, who killed off the hero and the heroine's skinflint guardian, so that he could bury them in the most approved style. Of course, like the milliner, he did not mention his own name exactly, but he referred to the 'Blue Cross Ambulance' that went to the scene of the accident and brought the remains to the 'Capper Morgue.' Now there is only one Blue Cross Ambulance in this neck of the woods and that belongs to Henry Tapper."

"Did you blue pencil it out?" I questioned.

"I did not. When I objected to his free advertising he flew into a rage, reminded me of the chapter written by Mrs. Tugwell, and threatened to cancel his advertising and hinted that his brother-in-law of the Creswell Furniture company would do the same if I did not run his installment as he had written it, so what could I do in view of the blunder made by Jack with the Tugwell chapter?

"But his killing off the hero right in the middle of the story was a blow that seemed almost unsurmountable," continued the editor after a moment's reflection. "You understand, Doctor Jamison had been scheduled to write the last chapter of the serial. He came blustering down here and wanted to know how in thunder we could expect him to finish a story without a hero. He was sore as a good-sized boil, and I didn't blame him. He said he would get even with Tapper if it were his last act on earth."

"It must have been rather novel to continue a story without a hero," was my comment.

"But we didn't continue without a hero —I wish we had. The one who was to contribute the next installment was Miss Nell May Marlow, a teacher in one of the grammar schools. She promised to find a new hero, so Doctor Jamison could make a swell finish to the story. And she did. Who do you suppose it was?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I admitted.

"My own son," he said with a snort, "and he has been nutty over it ever since. That's where he is now, down at Seal Beach at a week-end party with that bloomin' little schoolma'am. Why, man, I never felt so mortified in my life. My own son a hero in my own paper! She didn't refer to him as Jack Orcutt, but she described the big, raw-boned, taffy-haired, red-faced rascal, with such detail that a stranger would recognize him at a glance. To make matters worse, she introduced herself into the story as a friend of the unsophisticated country girl who had bloomed into a glorious womanhood and was cutting great capers in society, all within a few months. As the new character in the story, this schoolma'am helped to engineer a reception given to the victorious football squad, and it wasn't even football season. Of course the new hero

—my son, you know—was the champion of the team and at first sight of this teacher she had him begin to talk woozy-woozy stuff to her in the story, and I guess he has been at it ever since."

A shadow crossed his countenance as he again turned and gazed out of the window.

"Does the story end there?" I asked.

"No, man, no!" he blazed back, "it don't end there. Right here is the end of it, right here before you. And Lord, man, what an ending it is! After the schoolma'am cut loose with her mushy effusion, I determined to put a finish to the serial business in a hurry. You know I couldn't stand that son of mine as a hero—I know him too well—so I made an excuse to the preacher, the real estate man, and the president of the Woman's Club, who were in line for a chapter each, that owing to a lack of space, which was being crowded with increased advertising, it would be necessary to omit their installments and to close the interesting narrative quite prematurely. I then turned it over to Doctor Jamison for the concluding chapter, fully convinced that he would straighten the whole affair out, instead of plunging me into still deeper trouble. You see, I had entirely forgotten the threat he had made against Tapper, the undertaker."

"I venture it had an absorbing finish in the doctor's hands."

"Absorbing is right," he returned with a sarcastic smile. "However, if Doc Jamison hadn't been so hell bent on avenging the untimely death of the first hero, at the hands of the undertaker, there might have been a little more logic and good sense to the finish."

Gathering up the manuscript before us the editor thrust it into my hand. "Read it" he exclaimed.

It appeared that the last writer had scattered the characters of the story over a wide territory. It was clear, as I read, that it had required some skilful manœuvering for Doctor Jamison to land them safely back home in time for a boat excursion to Sea Gull Island. Gradually it became clear to me why I had found the grizzly little editor in such a state of perturbation, for, after rounding up his herd of fractious characters part of whom had come to be well known as persons about town and others purely fictitious, Doctor Jamison concluded thus:

"It was a merry crowd that had assembled at the pier where the *Cabrillo,* the magnificent excursion steamer which was to bear our hero and his friends over the foam-crested waves to the beautiful island resort, fretted at the cables that held her captive. All were on hand save Hank Capper, the undertaker, who was delaying the party. Finally word arrived that Hank must forego the pleasure of the outing for business reasons.

"It developed later that Capper had been momentarily expecting to receive news of the death of Mrs. Timothy Garland, who had taken to her bed, dangerously ill the night before. All morning he paced up and down the rough-floored parlors awaiting orders to take charge of the remains.

"Finally, in a round-about manner, word came. Mrs. Garland's son-in-law, David Marshall, had told a neighbor that, thanks to the efficient work of Doctor Jenson, Mrs. Garland was quite out of danger and that as soon as she had sufficiently recovered she would return to her home in Grand Junction.

"Then Hank remembered the boating party. Perhaps he would not be too late to join the jolly picnickers. He made his way to the pier, only to see the beautiful *Cabrillo,* with its precious human freight, steaming away a mile distant in the direction of the island. Capper was decidedly crestfallen. He had lost some valuable business through the skill of Doctor Jenson, and here he was standing at the wharf watching the boat he might have taken, gliding swiftly out of reach.

"As he stood there bewailing his ill-fortune, he was startled by the sound of an explosion out at sea. The *Cabrillo* was rent asunder as the straining boilers suddenly gave way. Human bodies were hurled through the air and were dropping near the wrecked boat, amid a mass of splintered timbers. That all on board were lost was beyond question. Though dazed

by the realization of the terrible catastrophe he had just witnessed, Hank's mind instinctively turned to his chosen calling. Rushing to the little telegraph office in the wharfmaster's building, he sent a message to the county officials, telling of the wreck of the *Cabrillo* and urging the county coroner to grant him permission to recover and bury the bodies. Then he telephoned his man Baxter to rush the 'Blue Cross ambulance' down to the wharf.

"What seemed to Hank like an age, followed the arrival of the ambulance. As he paced up and down the rough-floored pier, the telegraph operator emerged from his little office and handed him a message. His face blanched as he read it, then he sank into a sitting posture on a shipping box. As he sat there, gazing into the depths of the azure sea, he started with surprise as he saw before him the rugged hero making his way through the water, bearing in his strong arm the unconscious pretty school teacher. The message dropped from Hank's nerveless hand as he turned on his heel and walked away. His man, Baxter, recovered the message which evidently had caused his master so much pain, and read:

Rockport, August 28.

Henry Capper,
Martinsburg.

Thanks for the message. Have ordered. Casey and Merritt to recover and care for bodies from wrecked "Cabrillo."
G. A. Toberman, County Coroner.

"Thus did Hank Capper suffer through his trait of avarice.

FINIS"

I could not repress a smile as I returned the manuscript to Orcott.

"And I'm going to publish the blasted thing just as it is," the blustering editor thundered. "I'm going to have that glorious word 'Finis' set in twenty-four point black-face type, so the world may know that this bloomin' serial is eternally at an end. And," he continued as he donned his rusty Panama, "I want you to take charge of this shebang for a while; I'm going to the mountains until the trouble blows over."

Next month: SUNK BY A FLOATING MINE *by Charles Leroy Edson.* It is about a chap who gives up a fifteen dollar job in Kansas City to mine silver and zinc in Arkansas. He doesn't find much silver or zinc, but discovers something which he at once labels "fairy gold" without asking the opinion of an assayer.

SOFT SOAP

BY NEWTON A. FUESSLE.

Have you a little cake of soap in your home? The ordinary salesman might ask that question at every house in town in order to create a demand for his brand of soap. In this story, we have a salesman who found a better way to stimulate a sluggish market.

BUDLONG sighed contentedly as he watched the railroad yards of Clayton slip past like the tail end of an unpleasant dream. "Farewell, old town," he murmured, "I hope I never see you again."

The humming of the train's wheels was cut into faster and faster syncopated time by the tangle of passing switches; and never had cheerier music found its way into the cockles of the young man's heart.

He rubbed his eyes as if to erase the last lingering mental visions of the city he was leaving behind, gazed fondly at the oil-cloth sample-case and the pig-skin grip on the seat beside him, and beamed at the dingy day-coach and its motley occupants.

Then he reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of letters and other truck, and ran idly through them. He smiled as his eye fell upon his membership card in the Clayton local of the Machinists' Union.

"Hello there, old friend," he said under his breath. "I thought I had torn you into a million pieces. No? Well, here's where your usefulness ceases."

On the point of tearing up the card, he stopped. "No," he mused, "I'll just keep you—as a little souvenir of sad and bygone days."

He returned the card to his pocket, regarded the increasing snow-flurries outside the car window, then resigned himself to the altogether delightful thought of—soap.

Hitherto the institution of soap had been nothing but one of thousands of trivial and inconsequential things of life to Budlong. But today it filled his sample case, dominated his thoughts, and constituted his deliverer from the land of bondage. Soap was the magic carpet which had whisked him out of Clayton. Soap was the wings of the morning on which he was soaring to new and greener pastures. Soap had redeemed him from an uncongenial and disagreeable job as a machinist's helper.

Pretty soon he rose and went to the smoking compartment. There he groped his way to a seat through the wreaths and festoons of tobacco fumes that garlanded it, and gnawed the end off a Colorado maduro.

"Light?" said a friendly stranger, striking a match and handing it to him. "Looks like we'd have a nice little bunch of snow for Thanksgiving," he added, looking Budlong over.

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed the soap seller, surveying the other's snappy sartorial appearance, his shrewd eyes, and engaging mannner. His language was quick and decisive. To Budlong he looked like a salesman. His finger-nails had been set a-glitter by the head manicurist at the Hotel Clayton. His lavender hose were chromatically matched by a bow tie, and again by amethysts in his cuff-links and lavender stripes in his spotless shirt.

A week ago Budlong might have taken him for anything from a first-class second-story man to a second-class first-baseman. It would never have occurred to him to index him mentally as a potential Gideon. But today, with his thoughts crowded into one compact cluster and revolving in giddy circles in the groove of traveling salesmanship, he naturally took the other for a commercial traveler, albeit he did not recognize the Travelers' Protective Asso-

ciation badge in the lapel of his coat.

"Going far?" asked the stranger amiably.

"Only to Jarvis today," answered Budlong.

"Oh yes. Jarvis, eh? The best thing about Jarvis is its limited population. You can get through with it quick, and beat it. Say, its merchants are so afraid of the dotted line that they even hate to sign for a registered letter. What Jarvis needs is a few dozen first-class funerals. I'm no crepe-hanger by temperament but I'd much prefer to show my samples somewhere else. What's your line?"

"Soap," replied Budlong. "I'm with the Aunt Sally Soap Company."

"Clayton firm. Well, don't let Jarvis get your nanny. Did you ever make Jarvis before—jolly little Jarvis?" asked the other.

"Never. This is my first whack at the selling game."

"Well, I wish you luck. How'd you happen to pick out soap?"

Budlong saw no objection to unburdening his soul to his pleasant companion, and was presently steam-shoveling reminiscent confessions into the listening ear. "Oh, it was all wrong—all wrong," he ended earnestly. "Did you ever stand in front of a big brute of a machine and grind valves? Don't ever do it. It's work. It's labor. Oh—oh!" he added solemnly. "Why, the day these Aunt Sally people took me on, I gazed into the friendly eyes of the dear old lady in the trademark, and she looked to me like the Statue of Liberty with a bar of soap in her hand."

"Wait till you've spent a few months trying to sell jay-hawk merchants," grinned the other tolerantly. "Every so often I take a solemn oath I'll never lug another sample-case, or register in another hick hotel. Here, smoke one of my cigars."

"What's the matter with it?" asked Budlong, accepting it.

"And say," continued the other, "if you've nothing better to do, why not improve your time by selling me your line? The practice will do you good. Shoot, I'll be the goat. Maybe I can drop-kick in with a few helpful little suggestions."

Budlong took heart, a long breath, and talked for the best part of an hour, not at all averse to rehearsing his interpretation of the merits of the various Aunt Sally products.

An inhospitable swirl of snow and wind hit him in the face as he got off the train. The icy hands of an old-fashioned blizzard reached impertinently for his sample-case and almost took it away from him.

"*Squeak*, squeak! *Squeak*, squeak!" said the sidewalk beneath his feet as he headed for the Central House, following the directions of the station agent.

The wooden stove in the dingy dining room rattled in the wind that rocked the old hotel when he entered to eat his dinner. The consummé was luke-warm, the pot roast pernicious, and the weak coffee both over-heated and heated over. Budlong partook warily of the fare with a cautious thought for his digestion.

Then he gnawed the end off a cigar, dropped into a wooden chair in the battered lobby, picked up the Jarvis *Clarion* and sought cheer in its pages. The headlines informed him of a strike at the lounge factory, a threatened walk-out at the brick-yards, and a Washington's Birthday basket social at All-Souls M. E. Church. He ignored this last criterion of Jarvis business conditions and turned to the editorial page. There he found a half column editorial on "Hard Times" and a string of advertisements of Sheriff's sales. Budlong grinned grimly.

He dropped the paper on the floor, settled back in his chair, drew hard at his cigar, and began mentally rehearsing his selling talk, going over all the alluring points of the soap to which he had duly sworn allegiance.

The next morning he picked out a likely-looking store, and entered. It was one of those nondescript general stores which a first-class funeral and the succession to power of an energetic son and heir may eventually transform into a department store.

"Wall, watta-ya-got?" piped the shivery old proprietor, scratching the G-strings of his long, gaunt neck.

"Soap," answered Budlong with well-timed alacrity. "I want to show you—"

"No ye don't. By gum, I've listened to soap drummers till my ears ache. I've got more soap stowed away in this store right now than I could sell in ten years. Ye couldn't sell me a bar o' soap if ye chinned me till midnight. By gol, the railroads ought to post up notices to keep traveling men out of this town. I tell ye, we've quit spendin' money. We're as flat as a pancake. Can't buy beer."

Budlong perceived the futility of further discussion, and the wisdom of retreat. His next stop was a drug store. The soda fountain, closed for the season, bore placard entreaties to try this and that cure for corns, spavins, dandruff, hang-nails, and asthma. Dealer-helps flourished. Over the framed registered pharmacist credentials hung a hand-lettered sign which read:

'Tis well to trust,
'Tis hell to bust,
No trust, no bust, no hell.

The air was laden with the composite odor of tincture of aconite, glycerine, hair-oil, epsom salts, pipe smoke, creosote, tar soap, wintergreen, and chocolate drops.

"Good morning, my friend, what can I do for you?" spoke the druggist, leaning over the counter with a beam of professional welcome in his pharmeceutical eye.

Budlong brought his sample case forth from behind his back with a sad, commiserating feeling of "I hate to do it but—"

"I'm handling the famous Aunt Sally line of soaps," he began, dropping lyddite on the pharmacist's hopes of selling something to this healthy-looking but potential disease-contracting stranger within the toll-gates.

The druggist shook his head with resentment. "I couldn't find room for another bar of soap if you made me a present of it. There was a fellow in here last night who talked me into laying in a supply that I didn't need any more than I need an elephant."

"But *my* soap," began Budlong with noteworthy pep.

"Nothing doing, brother. Your soap may be the greatest soap on earth, but I tell you I'm loaded to the guards and can't take on another bar—not even if it was guaranteed to wash away the sins of the world with one application."

"Give me a nickel's worth of that chewing gum," sighed Budlong, reaching for a coin.

Budlong left the place drearily regretful that he had never taken a course of study in one of the widely advertised colleges of salesmanship. He felt his shortcomings poignantly. Disgusted with the miserable efforts to entice Jarvis names into leaping off the springboard of desire, and on to the empty dotted line of his pad of order blanks, he pushed aimlessly on, trying desperately to marshal anew the routed phrases and sentences of selling which he had been earnestly rehearsing. Surely there must be some way to sell Aunt Sally soaps to the store-keepers of Jarvis.

The troubled troubadour of cleanliness visited store after store, and sang eloquently the alkaline bars of his sales song. He was determined to drag an order out of the set jaws of Jarvis. But everywhere he was met with impatient rebuff. The market was glutted with soap. It appeared that the verbose and convincing representative of a rival soap firm, Tabor and Son, had descended upon Jarvis the day before and made a commercial killing.

Everywhere, this Tabor person had been there ahead of Budlong. He had literally sold the town off its feet. He had dum-dumed every drug-store and gatlinged every grocer. He had built battlements of soap on counters where soap had never frowned before. It would take Jarvis years to live down the defeat its commercial prudence had sustained.

That evening Budlong dragged himself into the hotel, weary and disconsolate, to behold his natty, smiling, confident traveling companion of the day before. A suspicious idea registered hard against the screen of Budlong's brain. "Bluey!" he thought weakly.

"Greetings," said the other. "How are soap sales?"

"Rotten," answered Budlong.

"It was a shame for me to slip the order blanks to the local trade ahead of you," replied the other, "but business is business, and times are adamant. When you told me you were headed for Jarvis to sell soap, and when I heard what a knockout your selling arguments were, I knew I'd have to step lively and chatter fast if I expected to save my blithe bacon. So I got right busy and talked to half the trade before I hit the bed-tick. Sorry, old man. I'd buy a drink, only my train leaves in ten minutes, and I've got to be on my way. Bye-bye."

"Bluey," repeated Budlong, lifting a shaking hand to an aching forehead. The more his mind dwelt on it, the more keenly humiliated he felt over what had happened to him. He had certainly been roughly handled in his first tussle with competition.

He ate his dinner in a daze. Then he sauntered forth and bought a sample of every rival manufacturer's soap on the Jarvis market. His ideas of doing so were vague and hazy. When he returned to his room, he had enough soap in his pockets to cleanse an army. There was tar soap, glycerine, elderflower,—soap for every taste and purpose.

Budlong then rolled up his sleeves, peeled off the wrappers of the different bars of soap, crossed to the wash bowl, and began testing them. He had made up his mind to find the weak spot of each of these soaps if he washed himself sick in the process. He weighed the performance of each in the balance, especially those that bore the trade-mark of Tabor and Son.

After an hour of critical, qualitative, quantitative, canny, and comparative washing, he dropped weakly into the protesting arms of a feeble rocking chair with the despairing conclusion that his hectic abluent efforts were getting him absolutely nowhere. His hands were raw, his face red, and his soul in the clutch of a navy-blue funk. He looked unhappily at the dripping dune of soap on the wash-stand, and bewailed the reckless folly of his futile purchases. All soaps were beginning to look sadly alike to him.

"I was certainly a prize ass for ever thinking I could get away with a game like this," he mused. "But now that I'm in for it, I hate to lay down on the job like a lamb. It's not my style."

He began to gather up the waste of soap wrappers that strewed the floor, the bed, and the table, resolved to clear the decks for some clear thinking. He crumpled up and heaved the wreakage into the waste basket. Then espying a last lorn wrapper he dived into the corner where it lay. It bore the proud lettering, "Aunt Sally's Fine Castile Soap." He crumpled up the lithographic coat of the unsalable product angrily. Then he smoothed it out absently, and re-read the engaging description of its ingredients and the superlative care of its manufacture.

Suddenly his eye caught an innocent little group of words that had hitherto escaped his attention. They were buried at the very bottom of the printed matter, below the flourishing facsimilie of the Aunt Sally concern's noble signature. Budlong gave a little cry of delight. His discovery had sent a ray of hope flashing through the shadows of his commercial despair. "O-h-h!" he ejaculated. "Oh, sweetheart!"

His discovery electrified him. He laid the wrapper carefully away and then swooped upon the waste basketful of discarded wrappers of rival soaps. Each he smoothed out with nervous fingers, and scanned the printed matter on each with searching eyes. From wrapper to wrapper he passed. On each he was looking for something which—wonder of wonders—he did not find. Only the Aunt Sally wrappers bore the incomparable printed talisman.

For a moment Budlong stood in the middle of his room in a brown study. Then he grabbed the copy of the Jarvis *Clarion* which haply he had saved, and began hunting for an announcement he vaguely recalled having seen. He found it, and intoned the exclamation: "Great!" Then he added fondly: "Soft, very, very soft!"

The hands of his watch made a straight and lovely line that proclaimed only ten

minutes after eight. Budlong took the various rival soap wrappers with the devout air of a deacon taking up a thanks offering. The Aunt Sally wrappers he tucked jealously into his wallet. Then he slid precipitately into his overcoat, grabbed his hat, and descended into the lobby.

"Where is Wagner Hall?" he asked the night clerk, who was shooting crap at the desk with a hackney driver with an acne nose.

"Thanks. Here, smoke a cigar," replied Budlong with much pep, on receipt of the information. Then he sprang forth into the frosty night.

Wagner Hall was only two scant squares away, for the Jarvis business region was huddled together in squat and modest blocks. The hall was located right above the first drug store where Budlong had vainly sought to snare the proprietor into recording an order for his goods. Its location therefore filled him with a merry glow. He dashed up the stairs that led to the hall, three at a time, accelerating like a $1070 motor car on a demonstration hill.

The savant of soap found Wagner hall packed, and the monthly meeting of the Jarvis Federation of Labor about to be called to appropriate order. Excited groups were discussing wage scales, hours of toil, working conditions and other causes of proletarian grievance and unrest. The air was filled with tobacco smoke and class consciousness; for Jarvis was replete with strikes and rumors thereof.

"Hold on there!" challenged the sentry at the door in soldierly accents, as Budlong tried to enter. "You've got to have a union card on you to get in here."

"Right," answered Budlong pleasantly, producing his wallet, and fishing out his now cherished membership card in the Clayton local of the Machinist's Union.

"Glad to meet you, brother," exclaimed the sentry, taking a look at the newcomer's credential, and then his hand in a grasp of welcome.

"My name's Budlong," said the erstwhile machinist. "Can you point out the president of this organization?"

"That's him with the green necktie on, just getting on the platform," was the answer.

Budlong shouldered his way triumphantly to the platform, and was presently having a word with the czar of local labor conditions. The latter was a stocky teamster from the resolute stock of Erin. He had the jaw of Jess Willard, the vim of Von Hindenburg, and the eye of Kitchener. In his pocket was a letter of endorsement from Samuel Gompers, praising his able policies, and urging Jarvis locals to fight on.

The meeting was called to order with a bang. The parliamentary drama spun swiftly into motion. Budlong listened to the transactions while silently rehearsing the speech he was soon to make. A number of visiting brethren from other locals were already speaking, conveying to the Jarvis proletariat the greetings of their fellows. Then Budlong found himself listening to the chairman's introduction of himself.

"We have with us tonight Brother Budlong of the Clayton machinists. He comes from a place where the good fight is being carried on gallantly. Mr. Budlong."

"Fellow unionists," began the salesman, "I am unaccustomed to making speeches, but I come to you with an important message and am going to deliver it the best I know how. I come to you, bringing you new sinews of war in your noble struggle with the forces of capitalism. I am here tonight to show you where you have been making a great mistake as unionists and how you can correct it. I am going to put in your hands a powerful weapon of offense against our enemies."

Budlong talked on, gaining new confidence with every sentence. He talked as he had never talked before in his life. He told the meeting of the existence of a conspiracy on the part of Jarvis merchants that was being directed right at the heart and soul of unionism. He called them eloquently to their colors. He demanded that they get together solidly and renounce and shatter, in the name of their unions, this conspiracy against their cause. He stirred the Jarvis Federation of Labor up in a way that it had never been stirred.

When he sat down, it was amid a burst of cheers that rocked the hall hard enough to shake the bottles off the shelves of the druggist on the ground floor.

When the cheering subsided, one of the members rose and offered a resolution that was adopted unanimously and made Budlong tingle delightfully from head to foot.

Budlong returned to his hotel after the meeting with a feeling that the world was his. He knew at last how the Count of Monte Cristo must have felt when he uttered his deathless exclamation. He went to bed, to sleep long and soundly. He dreamed of a committee of labor unionists handing him bags of gold dollars.

Toward noon the next day, he dropped casually in at the general store where he had made his first effort to record a sale. He asked carelessly for a sack of smoking tobacco. While he was being served by a young clerk, the old proprietor, he of the G-strings, made a jump for him, and said:

"Say, ain't you the feller that was in here trying to sell me some o' that Aunt What's-Her-Name soap the other day?"

"The same," answered Budlong suavely, "Aunt Sally Soap. You told me you were full up with soap—couldn't take on another bar on a bet."

"Wal, funny thing," answered the other, but there's been a dozen people in here last night an' this mornin' demandin' Aunt Sally. Refuse to touch anything else."

"That so?" remarked Budlong innocently. "That's kind of them, I'm sure."

"Kind!" snarled the store-keeper. "It don't appeal to me by a dang sight. It beats all hell-beatin'-tan-bark—that's what it does. Here with me loaded down with more soap that I can use in a year's time, and folks yellin' their blocks off for another brand. How do you sell that Aunt Sally?"

Budlong opened his sample case, produced his order pad, and presently had the other's signature where he wanted it.

That was his busy day. Proceeding from store to store, he learned everywhere, to his delight, that an insistent clamor for Aunt Sally Soap had got there ahead of him. Merchants who had scorned his presence the day before now fell on his neck and ordered heavily. They looked woefully at their stock of other soaps, but gave their orders for Aunt Sally because its demand had sprung up overnight like a huge mushroom that overshadowed every other soap on the market. Most of the dealers who had ordered Tabor and Son's products on the day before rushed cancellations to the manufacturer by wire. Those who had fallen the hardest for Tabor and Son's garrulous and genial representative, now didn't want the stuff around.

When Budlong dropped into his hotel for luncheon at noon, he found a dozen or more telephone calls left by dealers all over Jarvis. They wanted to see him sure before he left the city.

Budlong smiled an inscrutable smile. And again he smiled inscrutably that evening when a long day-letter came from his sales manager in grateful acknowledgment and fervent congratulation on the deluge of orders for swift and heavy shipments to the trade in Jarvis.

Budlong lingered longer in Jarvis than any traveling salesman who had ever entered its gates. For it took time to appease the intemperate demands of those agitated merchants who had previously frowned upon his coming and sought to scorn his merchandise.

When finally he settled back in the seat of the train which was sweeping on to further conquests he took from his pocket the crumpled wrapper which had robed the bar of Aunt Sally in that despairing hour when selling anything in Jarvis had seemed the acme of impossibility. Once more he smoothed it out carefully, reread the engaging description of its incomparable ingredients and the superlative care of its manufacture. Again his eye paused with a glow on the little group of words and the innocent little smudge of printer's ink at the bottom of the piece of paper, right beneath the flourishing facsimilie of the concern's signature.

"I got to hand it to myself, kid," he grinned as he imprinted a loving kiss upon the union label.

THE SELFISHEST WOMAN

BY BLANCHE BRACE

A stage favorite, who wallows in publicity sprees and has her net ever ready to catch a little fulsome praise, gives a charity performance in a leper colony, hoping to add a rare specimen of press notice to her collection.

THAT was the week there was an all-star cast at the Globe, and the bloodiest fight on record for the best dressing-room. There wasn't a moment's truce. Even in the third act where all three of the women were on the stage together, it was just as bad, for then their maids foregathered, and went on with the battle-royal with their mouths full of pins. The wonder was that they didn't swallow them.

They waged war about this, that, and the other, and finally about their mistresses. If no man is a hero to his valet, it's a hundred times as true that no actress is a heroine to her maid. So, the night that I overheard this story, they were at the point of stabbing each other with the nail-files over which wage-payer was the worst slave-driver.

"Gawd only knows what I go through with, with that woman!" asserted a sullen-faced girl, who was combing out the bronze-red wig that I remembered as the property of the divine Peggy O'Brien. "Thinks she owns me, body and soul. She's the most selfish thing I ever saw."

"Selfish, is it?" spoke up a soft-voiced Irish girl. "What do you know about the meanin' of the word? You don't work for Evelyn Albee, do you? That woman, girls dear, just gloats on keepin' me on my knees. She'd have me comb her hair on my knees if it could be done, as, the Blessed Mother be thanked, it can't."

A great burst of applause came back to us there, softened to a sound that reminded you of the popping of corn in an old-fashioned skillet. When it was finished, Mrs. Drum spoke. She was Edith Dufrain's maid, a round, little, light-brown hazel-nut of an elderly person.

"You ought to have known Carneen Carmichael once," she commented drily.

"Carneen Carmichael?" echoed the Irish girl, yawning. "Who would she be after being?"

"Vawdville, I s'pose," scoffed Peggy O'Brien's slavey.

"Vawdville!" Mrs. Drum's voice scratched back. "My Gawd, how some folks can keep on livin' in the world, and be so ignorant! Do you mean to say you ain't ever heard of Carneen Carmichael?"

"What is she starrin' in, if she's so much?" the Irish girl demanded.

"She ain't starrin' now," Mrs. Drum replied. Then she bristled at the grins the others exchanged. "She ain't starrin' now because she chose to do something else. Six years ago they called her the most popular actress on Broadway, and the hardest-hearted. They said she'd stepped to fame on the laughs and the lines she'd stolen from others, and the high-class hearts she'd broken, in order to get herself into print.

"Well, it was true enough. I knew her the way you know the woman whose face you cold-cream four times a day, and I'll say for her she was the selfishest I've ever met. She slipped up once, though, on bein' selfish. And that's why she ain't starrin' now.

"They called her a beauty. She wasn't. She had a lot of black hair, and two black eyes, and a nose and a mouth, just like other folks. But New York loved her because she snubbed it.

"Selfish! It was her middle name, her family name, and her pet name. Once a boy with too much money and too little brains shot himself with her picture in his

hand. What do you think Carneen Carmichael cared? It was good for a front-page story, that suicide.

"We played New York two seasons in 'The Test' before the producer decided to send it to Boston. That was as far from Broadway as Carneen Carmichael ever went. She couldn't waste her time on the wild and woolly West, she said.

"Herbert Daggett followed her to Boston, of course. He'd been hangin' around the whole of the three years that she had been a star. I never did like the man. He had the lonesome eyes that make you want to kick a hang-tail dog just because you are sorry for it. But he had barrels of money, and Carneen Carmichael kept him at heel. I won't deny that he was amusin'. He had a way of tellin' very good stories about the forty years he'd been knockin' around odd corners of the world.

"Boston's a dub show town, but Carneen Carmichael made a hit there. She'd have made a hit in the Bad Lands or the Sahara. Some folks are made that way.

"We were there just before Easter, when Carneen took a notion to run down to a leper island called Penikese, forty or fifty miles from Boston, to give a Saturday afternoon performance. Of course, the manager was hoppin' mad at the idea of closin' the house for a Saturday matinee till he read what the newspapers had to say about Miss Carmichael's kindness to the eternal exiles from the footlights. Kindness? Huh! It was just plain press-stuff. She was piggish.

"But Carneen was as pleased as if she'd been going to act before the king.

"'Bring all my make-up, Annie,' she told me a dozen times. She always wanted it all.

"We went in a crazy little catboat that rocked like mad. It ain't easy to hire a boat to go to a leper island. Herbert Daggett had to come along; and besides ourselves there were in the party a bishop who was goin' to conduct Easter services, and a famous Boston doctor. He said he was goin' down to try out some kind of a new inoculation on cockroaches. I guess he was just tryin' to make Carneen laugh. She could laugh like nobody else.

"The wind came up, and we see-sawed around in that crazy little cat-boat till I felt like a fish out of water, and Mr. Daggett got the color of Roquefort cheese and so sulky he wouldn't talk at all. He gave up tellin' about the Philippine Islands, where he'd lived, and the much superior kind of lepers they had there, and went and sat by himself. But Carneen kept laughing and singing and flirting with the doctor and the bishop at once.

"'I've always admired your demure costumes so much!' I heard the bishop tell her, and I grinned to myself. Carneen Carmichael's habit of wearin' long sleeves was just to make her different from other actresses, I was sure.

"At last we passed the little island of Cuttyhunk, where the entire population came down to the wharf to wave to Carneen, and saw the shores of Penikese. As we drew up to the island of the lepers, she was saluted three times with the flag of Massachusetts. She loved that. There was nothin' in the world that pleased Carneen Carmichael so much as admiration. That was because she was so selfish.

"Two doctors and their wives had come down to welcome us at the stone pier, which they said had been built by Agassiz, whoever he was, before the lepers lived at Penikese. It was all very pleasant and gay, with the sick folks hidden away from sight, half a mile away across the hill. But the moment I set foot to the island, I shivered all over, I don't know why.

"Carneen was the heart of the crowd at dinner. I was at another table in an alcove of the same room, with the nurses from the leper hospital, and I couldn't help watchin' her. She just bubbled with life. I had never known her so glad.

"After dinner—they call the noon meal that in New England—there was music and talkin' for awhile in the livin' room. But Carneen Carmichael excused herself the vain young thing, and came to me to be made up for her act at the hospital. They laughed at her.

"'You are quite beautiful enough as you are, Miss Carmichael,' I heard Doctor Godfrey tell her, and I grinned, thinkin'

how Herbert Daggett must be glarin' at him. When I had finished, she looked beautiful all right for once, with her black hair, and her dancin' eyes, and a bit of color in her cheeks that were mostly so pale. I started to leave the make-up where it was till we came back from the other side of the island, but she wouldn't have it.

"'Bring it along, Annie!' she said. 'I may be needin' it. I want to look just right today.' She was as vain as kingdom come.

"Two little things made me feel funny as we were startin' for the leper half of the island. A big Airedale belongin' to one of the doctors started to follow us, and they drove it back again. Dogs mustn't be let go from one side of the island to the other, they said. And they made Carneen Carmichael leave her big ermine muff behind, too, though she pouted.

"'It's just as well to be on the safe side,' they told her.

"So we went single file along a little path with slippery grass on both sides of it, and up a hill, and passed through a gate into the leper half of the island. Ugh! I ain't going to tell you about those poor creatures. There was one Japanese, though, called Moi, whose face looked like a gray sponge, and whose hands were all bandaged and oozy. Sometimes I see him yet in my dreams. I guess he was about the worst.

"Among the Easter lilies in the leper hospital those poor things sat waitin' for Carneen Carmichael. They all looked alike. You couldn't even guess the nationality they had been. It was right pitiful to see them trying to clap their poor hands when she got through. You couldn't blame them, though; I had never heard Carneen so wonderful as she was that day. I almost forgot how selfish she was as I listened.

"Through it all, the doctors didn't seem to be payin' much attention to her. I noticed them whisperin' together, and I saw them watching Herbert Daggett. It made me sort of sore that they didn't listen to Carneen. You'd have thought they were used to havin' folks like us come down from Boston every day.

"When it was over, and the bishop had made a little prayer for those who dwell outside the city with the lepers, they asked Herbert Daggett to come into the little dispensary. They told Carneen Carmichael to stay where she was, but she wouldn't be put off. I guess she was afraid to be there alone with the lepers. She made me come, too.

"They made Herbert Daggett sit down in the big dispensary chair, and at first they didn't seem to be goin' to say anything. Daggett laughed, and then he seemed to be a little annoyed. But they just sat there and stared at him, while Carneen Carmichael hummed a little tune.

"'Did you see many cases of leprosy while you were in the Philippines?' Doctor Godfrey asked him at last.

"'A good many; I told you comin' down,' Herbert Daggett rapped back at them.

"'And didn't you know that it almost always begins as a numb, dead-white spot either on the palm of the hand or the inner arm, or'—he stopped a minute—'on the side of the nose?'

"That was all he said. But Herbert Daggett fell together in his chair like you've seen one of those wooden dolls do when a child breaks the string.

"'My Gawd!' he said, talkin' low and without any feelin' at all. 'I've been watchin' that spot for weeks. Someone mentioned it every time I shaved.'

"That was when Carneen Carmichael pulled at my hand, and begged me to take her out of the room. We all thought she was goin' to faint. One of the nurses opened the door of her own little bedroom, and let us go in alone. The minute she shut the door, Carneen slipped from her little rough blue jacket, unbuttoned the cuff of her satin blouse, and held up her arm for me to look at, saying something very low and quick.

"'No!' I said. 'You don't know what you're sayin'. Oh, no, no!'

"'Yes,' she said. 'You listen to me. That's what you're paid for.'

"When we got back into the smelly little

dispensary, the doctors were tellin' Herbert Daggett that he could go back to Boston that night, to get his affairs in shape, but that it was against the law for him to leave the state of Massachusetts, and that he'd have to come to Penikese in a day or two, for good. And then Carneen Carmichael interrupted them.

"'You said this mornin' you admired me for wearin' long sleeves on the stage,' she said, looking at the bishop. 'Maybe you won't, when you see—this!'

"She rolled up her sleeve quick, as if she was doin' it on the stage, and they all saw that ugly mottle of lifeless white on her arm. She had pretty arms.

"'What!' cried the Daggett man in an ugly voice. 'You got it, too?'

"'It doesn't matter, dearest!' said Carneen Carmichael, and her voice was all glad and alive. 'You said you loved me. You wanted to marry me. I love you, too. We'll be married, then, and live in one of these little cottages, and—'

"'Leper cottages!' said Herbert Daggett.

"'I don't care,' said Carneen Carmichael. 'We can be married right away, can't we?' she said, to the others. 'Then I can take care of—then we can take care of each other, and it won't be so lonesome.'

"She got her way somehow. It was the Bishop who married them, and the rest of us stood around cryin'. But Carneen didn't care at all.

"And when we started back home, the rest of us, in that crazy little catboat, and I looked back, I shook all over to see the cliff there with yellow-white spots on it, and the bank that the water had partly eaten away. And I wondered if I had sinned in helpin' Carneen Carmichael put the makeup on her arm."

There was a moment's silence, broken by the far-off ripple of laughter from the audience.

"They found it out later. Where was you that you didn't read it in the papers?" Mrs. Drum asked them. "Of course, they let her stay, then. She was his wife, and she wanted to stay. Huh! Talk about selfish folks, she was the worst that I ever seen."

In the May number: THIRTY-FIVE TWENTY-SEVENTHS, *by Octavus Roy Cohen,* the story of a man who drove his office force all day and called himself into extra session every night to solve a problem in in efficiency, viz: how to make twenty-seven people do the work of thirty-five.

THE FEMALE OF SPECIES

BY DAVID A. WASSON.

This story is reprinted by request. It is not entered in The Black Cat Club contest.

LATE one afternoon a warm and friendly sou'wester fanned the down-east coaster Monhegan past the Isle of Shoals. Little Cap'n Ephraim Cutwater lowered his canvas-covered spyglass and turned to his six-foot spouse. "Don't ye cal'late we'd better dodge into Porchmith to-night, Lizy?" he whined. "Looks kinder dirty off there in the southeast!"

When other captains consulted their barometers, Capt'n Ephraim interviewed his wife, to the crew's secret joy. In their opinion "Old Fathom" was all wool and a yard wide, and she could pull the wool over hubby's red little eyes all she chose. She had sailed with him longer than most of them could remember, and it was forecastle gossip that Cap'n Ephraim was skipper only by courtesy.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" scoffed his better three-quarters. "Ephraim Cutwater, you never in the world see more than a little fog with the moon so nigh full as she is, and you know it. We'll haul her right out southeast by east and make our run."

"I wanted to mud her in there to Kittery Cove and try to git at that new leak in the rudder port, Lizy dear," pleaded the captain, trying a new tack.

The imperturbable Mrs. Ephraim cracked a knowing smile. "This old hooker has sweat her little three hundred clips an hour ever since we took her, Ephraim Cutwater, and you know it. She ain't leakin' no more, is she?"

"I kin see the masts of quite a little fleet in there already, Lizy," urged the skipper, raising the glass once more and conveniently forgetting to answer her question.

His helpmeet grunted again. "All you see, or wanter see, Ephraim Cutwater, is the chimleys of them breweries, and you know it. If there's any vessels in there for a harbor they're bound west. If we ever went in there we'd ground onto our beef bones before we ever got out. You'd be three sheets in the wind so quick 'twould make your head swim!" With this unconscious truism she waved her hand and dismissed the subject.

Thirsty Cap'n Ephraim regretfully saw the hazy outline of the genial New Hampshire sands slowly merge into the rocky and austere coast of the prohibition state as the Monhegan winged out and headed down shore with Boon Island's slim white tower over the starboard cathead.

Several craft behind her proceeded sheep-like to follow suit. There was marked, though prudently silent displeasure on the part of the foiled skipper. In his present state of mind he would have liked to see them scudding panic-stricken for port, his own vessel overwhelmed in a sudden tempest and himself vindicated with his tyrannical wife's last gurgling breath.

But no such luck. The dull red sun foundered in a smoky glowing west full of promise for the morrow. A swell, soft and gentle as the touch of a mother's hand, wafted the Monhegan away from the cooling sea of molten light astern, into ominous gloom in the east, which the captain fondly hoped might hide the ingredients of foul weather.

Again no such luck. Its menace too, was scattered, first by a luminous mist over the horizon, then by a wondering oval moon which oozed over the sea rim and hung almost on the jib-boom end, as if to bar the way. Instead it dripped an undulating silvery lane clean to the old schooner's bluff

bow, and as the breeze freshened she trod it as eagerly as a boy on forbidden ground. Cap'n Ephraim was moved to admit grudgingly to himself that it was a pretty good kind of night for a run, after all.

Astern, the red and green eyes of one of the silent craft which had reached the same conclusion followed the Monhegan's bubbling wake devoutly, though wan in the white glare of the moon. A spectral pinnacle of canvas caught and reflected its pale glory as the pursuer closed up slowly on the coaster. It was a dainty white schooner yacht, garbed in the last towering cloth of her fine raiment; a dove with the wings of a swan.

Everyone knows that a stern chase is a long one. This one was so long that the moon no longer lighted the way when the tear and swash of the yacht's foaming progress could be heard from the schooner. It still touched fleetingly on the brasswork of her exquisite decks, but no longer glorified the pinions of this queen of the night as it peeped shyly from behind her.

"Hello aboard the schooner! Where's the other one?" on a sudden from behind the yacht's bellying spinnaker, the sound echoing hollowly against the Monhegan's dingy sails.

"What other one?" inquired Captain Ephraim dutifully, just as his lady and mistress popped on deck partly clad in her husband's great-coat.

"Why, the one they sawed off from that one," came in tones of triumph from the unseen jester. Faint but appreciative haw-haws from the unseen jackies of the watch. Chorus of sulky silence from the chunky coaster. "No offence, my good man!" resumed the talkative yacht. This was another voice, less pleasant to listen to than the first. "Just report us will you? This is the schooner yacht Free Lance, J. Archibald Martingale owner, from Nassau for Bar Harbor, seventeen days out."

Here Old Fathom entered the conversation in her best heavy weather voice. "Well, this is the schooner Monhegan, J. Ephraim Cutwater master, from Boston for Boothbay, and we been out the biggest part of the night! You can do yer own reportin', you Smart Alecks, and you better sheer off lively or that galoot at the wheel will have ye afoul of us!"

"Good God, Howard, turn out quick!" one of the yachtsmen shouted down the companionway. "Here's the suffragette navy right on top of us!"

"Ephraim Cutwater, will you let anyone insult your pore wife so-fashion? Get right up atop of that house and tell them drunken dudes what we think of 'em, if you're a man!" screamed the maligned one.

At about this time Ephraim arrived on all fours upon the cabin top, but if he had formulated any ideas in flight it is fair to presume that the expression of them would have in no way helped the cause of outraged femininity. He scrambled to his feet and stood speechless, evidently stage struck. Both crews, in various stages of undress uniform, were now enjoying the exchange of amenities.

"Ephraim Cutwater, are you deef and dumb? Your pore wife has been insulted somethin' fearful, and you know it! Tell 'em you won't stand it!" came the voice of the prompter from the wings.

"Suffragette navy!" exclaimed the newest arrival on the yacht's deck. "You're way off, Arch. That's the fog whistle on Cape Elizabeth! We couldn't find it, so they've brought it out to us!"

"Yah! You're drunk!" piped the captain, finding his tongue at last. "Tryin' ter pick up a fog whistle on a clear night! Yah!"

The Monhegan's heavy main boom suddenly sagged inboard. The vessels were now abreast.

"Heads, Cap'n! We're goin' ter gybe! Hard a-port the yacht!" chorused the Monhegans.

The mainsheet did a hop-skip-and-jump in the water, flogged the helmsman and whipped taut with a rattling wrench of blocks. The boom, a gigantic flail imbued with life, swept overhead viciously, and struck tremendously at the offending yacht. Like a stout man hit in the stomach her snowy spinnaker collapsed, rent from luff to leech. The great spinnaker boom stood on end for an instant then cracked in three pieces and bombarded the deck below. The yacht gybed as if in vain retaliation, came-

to with a rush and lay fluttering like a bird with a broken wing.

And the captain of the Monhegan, oh, where was he? Struck behind the knees by the ribald main-boom he knelt gracefully in mid-air and landed froglike in the water half way between the warring craft. "Ephraim Cutwater, you come back here this minute!" screamed Old Fathom, with instinct born of long practice, but this time the poor man failed to obey. The much-rattled mate speared an oar after him, but whether it brained the skipper or proved the life-preserver it was meant for, none aboard the Monhegan could see.

When Eliza and the crew had lowered the center-board, trimmed-in the now subdued mainsail, let go the gib sheets, rolled the wheel down, dropped the leaky yawl-boat off the davits by the run, and manned her, the scene of the collision was, as might have been surmised, a cable's-length to windward. The grim coxswain in all probability was already a widow. Whether or not she realized it, she was as stolid as the Sphinx.

They pulled back wearily, each short, hurrying sea, slapping the boat full in the face as if to prepare them gradually for the final rebuff. They searched an empty sea, and then silently returned to the schooner, not deigning to speak the craft responsible for the mischief. She still hung in the wind some distance seaward, apparently clearing away the wreckage.

Old Ephraim had been a pretty decent sort of a chap in spite of his failings, thought the sobered pair at the oars. "Guess he must have been stunned by the boom," ventured the sympathetic mate.

"Yes, and you wait till we git this boat h'isted up agin and I'll show ye some of the all-firedest boo-hooin' you ever see!" was the curt reply. Which, the mate decided, was some sentiment for Old Fathom.

The faces of the cook and remaining man grinned over the bulwarks as they drew near. Old Fathom scrambled up the mainchains unaided and grabbed the head of the culinary department by the scruff of the neck. All hands sighed in relief. Richard was himself again.

"What d'ye mean, ye worthless black scum, by laughin' like a hyena at sech a time as this?" she demanded in a voice which again suggested the Cape Elizabeth fog whistle. "Do you wanter go overboard too?"

"Well suh—I mean marm," stammered the wriggling cook, "dis no-'count Dutchman yere 'lows how he done see a boat from de yacht pick up Little Nemo—I mean de Cap'n, suh—"

"Ya, ya, yust after you leave der ship," corroborated the Dutchman. "Ay tank he not bane hurt—"

Captain Eliza threw the culprit from her with a snort. Then she strode aft and soon had the Monhegan under way again, this time pointing for the blinding sun, or the half of it visible above the horizon. Half Way Rock's spiky lighthouse stuck up primly some miles inshore.

The mate saw Old Fathom furtively fling what he took to be a wadded handkerchief as far in the direction of Spain as the lightness of the missile would permit.

The Free Lance was just filling away to windward, and the coaster dawdled till she was overtaken again. The breeze was still freshening, but Captain Eliza needed no megaphone. "If you'll let her come-to again, I'll send the boat for my man!" she bellowed, but her voice this time lacked its usual raucous note. "And we'll be much obleeged to ye!"

A portly figure in white flannels jumped on the yacht's rail and held on by the main rigging while he shouted through a cupped hand: "Captain Cutwater presents his compliments, madam, and reports himself as in no condition to resume command of his schooner at present. Moreover, madam, in the process of resuscitation Captain Cutwater accidentally made the acquaintance of a certain brand of wine which has quite taken his fancy, and he desires to continue the tete-á-tete a bit longer." He bowed, flourished his yachting cap elaborately and stepped down, puffing for breath.

Old Fathom's jaw grew squarer. "He does, hey?" she retorted. "Well, then, you kin take the consequences! You know what kidnapin' means!"

"Oh, be a sport, Lizzie! Give the old

man a little breathing spell!" was all the satisfaction she got.

Now a light center-board coaster dead before the wind, with a rapping good whole-sail breeze, is about the slipperiest article in Uncle Sam's fleet of merchant windjammers, and her kind have shown their heels to many an arrogant yacht before now.

In a moderate breeze the Free Lance had overhauled the Monhegan easily with her giant spinnaker pushing its best. But now her spinnaker, or what was left of it, was reposing in the lazaretto, and it was breezing up smartly. Still her people feared not for her laurels. As a matter of fact, she had never taken part in just such a contest. So the sailing master scoffed at Old Fathom's vague threat, and scorned to haul his beautiful craft on the wind, at which kind of sailing she could have cut circles around the old coaster.

The Monhegan, with patched sails ballooning and straining and a "bone in her teeth" deep burying her rusty chain bobstay, loomed forebodingly on the yacht's starboard quarter, and slowly drew up in her seething frothy wake.

Brass-bound officers and beflanneled aristocrats on the Free Lance's luxurious decks rubbed their eyes and blinked in amazement, marvelling at the fluke in the breeze which thus proved the race not always to the swift. Still they applauded her generously. "Come on, old hoss!" they yelled.

Up, up crawled the Monhegan, her square-headed old mainsail out to port driving its utmost, and the silent helmswoman steering her finest. Conducive to neat work on her part was the spectacle of her errant husband stamping about insanely on the yacht's deck, and cheering his own craft to victory with a long bottle which glinted in the early sunlight as he waved it wildly. No cup racer in a final heat was ever urged on more heartily.

The Monhegan's chubby bow lapped the yacht's main rigging, fore rigging, windlass, stem, bowsprit end. Then Captain Eliza without warning threw her helm hard a-port.

Bang! Rip! Wrench! The big main boom slashed over the Monhegan's deck again like Home Run Baker's bat passing home plate. It landed fair in the Free Lance's faultless white mainsail and made a worse wreck of it than it had a few hours before of her silky spinnaker. Her varnished eighty-foot boom jumped crazily aloft, then stabbed down through the polished cabin and made a still crazier three-master of her. A ravaged club topsail overhead transformed itself into an elephantine flag of truce, whipping mightily on before.

In awful silence the appreciative crew lowered-away the wreck, while the afterguard shook fists, and at the stalwart Nemesis on the Monhegan's quarter deck hurled epithets unfit for the ear of lady or suffragette. The afflicted yacht was plodding hopelessly along under foresail and gybes as the avenger ranged up alongside again, her crew grinning with delight from ear to ear.

"'Bout ready to send my man aboard, Mr. J. Alphonso What's yer-name?" inquired Captain Eliza with sinister politeness. "Next time I cal'late ter wipe that 'ere toy mahogany launch offn yer port davids, and mebbe put a leetle black stripe along yer hull! Stripes is lucky, ye know!"

A council of war was evidently taking place on the yacht's deck, with Cap'n Ephraim as the *piece de resistance*. As far as could be seen from the Monhegan he was not wildly excited about its outcome. His bottle, it was observed, he waved with increasing facility.

At length the yacht came slowly into the wind, her long bow dipping deep into the rushing sunlit chop and her remaining canvas threshing thunderously in the lively sou'wester. Captain Eliza promptly hove-to, the Monhegan nearby. An oily smoothness to windward marked her drift.

"All right, old woman, come and get your wild man!" shouted one of the Free Lances through a megaphone.

"Oh, no, you don't!" returned Old Fathom, with the nearest approach to a smile seen for some time. "Them terms is all off now! You bring him over here

or I'll have that shiny launch to kindle the galley fire with, spite o' fate!"

That was the last straw. A dinghy was promptly lowered in the yacht's lee; Cap'n Ephraim was hustled into it with no great ceremony, and a couple of sturdy seaman buffeted their sprayblown way into the windless lee of the wall-sided Monhegan.

"Mr. Martingale wanted me to tell ye, ma'am, that any time ye wanted a job as sailing master, just let him know," grinned the stroke oar. "I reckon you'd find us a willin' crew," he added admiringly.

"You tell yer Mr. Martingale that he owes me for a new main sheet!" returned the unmoved object of this flattery. "I stranded mine that last wallop I give him."

They did the returned prodigal the honor of lowering him a rope ladder, and he was gaffed overside with plenty of help from both above and below. The truant leered brazenly at his lady, and said conciliatingly, "You was right about not goin' inter Porchmith last night, Lizy. Yer most allus right, Lizy."

She, however, overlooked his maudlin levity and pointed silently toward the cabin door. This phenomenon might portend anything. Captain Ephraim looked fearfully over his shoulder and then wobbled hastily cabinward.

As the Monhegan passed the crippled yacht for the last time, the crew had their hands more than full in straightening out the havoc and getting ready to bend a new mainsail, a task which in the strong breeze none on the coaster envied them. The beflanneled ones had nothing to say.

"I don't believe that pot-bellied cuss ever offered ye no job at all, ma'am," opined the literal-minded mate. "But if they was real sports they'd at least dip their colors to ye, ma'am."

"I cal'late I dipped their colors for 'em," said Old Fathom with something like a chuckle. "If I ain't mistook they're trailin' astern now along with a strip of that mainsail. Same time I don't misdoubt they're jest itchin' to dip 'em to us."

Majestic Sequin soon shrunk blue over the stern. Off the gray granite Cuckolds the faithful mainsail was hauled down as the Monhegan shivered in the wind's eye for a minute, and she went into Boothbay Harbor still a-boiling. Old Fathom put the finishing touches to her triumph by deftly anchoring in a tangle of small craft behind McFarland's island, while Cap'n Ephraim grinned idiotic approval from the companionway.

"Jest one thing, Lizy," he offered, emboldened by his sojourn with the idle rich, "'t ain't never a good idee to gybe her in a fresh breeze. Better to let her come-to 'n' fill away on the other nail—other tack—other tack."

"When I want any of your advice, Ephraim Cutwater, I'll ask for it, and you know it!" answered Old Fathom tartly.

Extract from shipping colums of following day's New York paper:

"Spoken: June 13, off Sequin, schooner yacht Free Lance, Nassau for Bar Harbor, 17 days out. Reports experienced heavy weather in Gulf Stream and lost minor sails and spars. All on board well and wished to be reported. By schooner Monhegan, at Boothbay."

The Black Cat for May will contain eight entertaining stories and another composite essay in criticism by our Consulting Editor, the reading public.

The Testification of Cynthyan Adams is a splended piece of character work, good and funny and a bit weepy. "I could see Mary Pickford playing this to perfection."

From one view point, *By Subterfuge* is a good slashing adventure yarn, virile, full of action and with a satisfying climax and denouement. Opposed to that is the opinion that the story strikes a tone of deadly mediocrity because of the lack of objective action in the first thousand words or so.

In *The Burning Rivet*, the lack of action is even more pronounced. The characters do very little acting. They are acted upon; and the obstacle encountered by the principal character is solved by an outside influence not by the character itself. This lack of action is in part offset by vivid description and by the suggestive repetition in connection with the hot rivet. The story is interest compelling, but the sordidness of characters and setting keep it from getting a higher place on the list.

The Two Mile Twins is clean and funny and racy in the right sense. The only fault seems to be that the reader's mind hastens ahead of the story.

The five dollar prize winners in the second contest were Mrs. A. M. Scruggs, Selma, Ala.; Raymond E. Lawrence, Portland, Ore.; Edwin Upson, Chicago, Ill.; Ed. Malloy, Topeka, Kansas; E. Harold Cummings, Malden, Mass.

The Fifth Contest comprises the stories in this issue (April); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before May 1st. Prizes will be awarded May 10; and the result of the contest will be announced in the July BLACK CAT, issued June 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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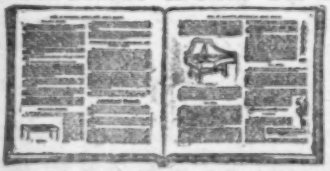

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Dr. E. Sauer, who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away habit forming drugs and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver, heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to

save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in the form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, visiting surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine or secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remdey in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 200 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.